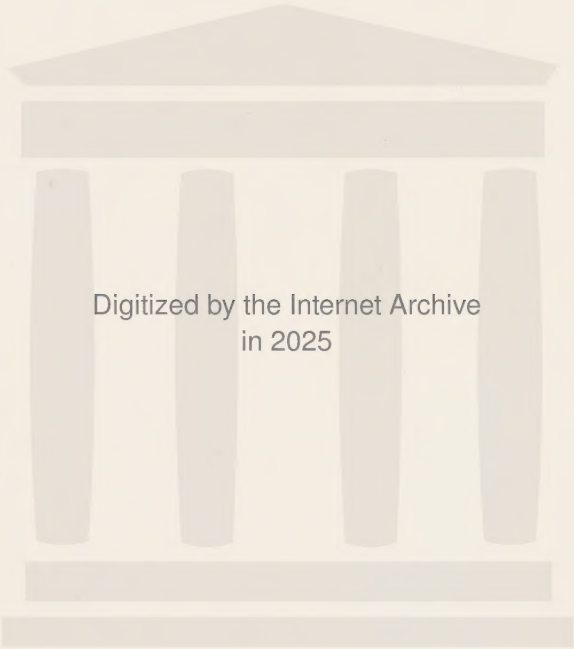
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SHANDON BELLS

SHANDON BELLS

A Novel

BY

WILLIAM BLACK

AUTHOR OF 'MACLEOD OF DARE,' 'SUNRISE,' ETC.

"With deep affection
And recollection
I often think of
Those Shandon bells,
Whose sounds so wild would
In the days of childhood
Fling round my cradle
Their magic spells."
FATHER PROUT.

IN THREE VOLUMES

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SHANDON BELLS.

CHAPTER I.

"SIE TRAGEN ZU DIR, O GELIEBTE!"

It is mid-day on the first of June; the skies are clear; and this old-fashioned coach goes jolting, and rattling, and swinging away through the lonely country that lies between Drimoleague and Bantry Bay. The warm summer air is sweetened, now with the fragrance of the abundant honeysuckle, now with a whiff of peat-smoke from one of those poor stone hovels near the wayside. There are plenty of beautiful things to charm the eye of the traveller. There are masses of blue forget-me-nots in the marshy pools. The waste bog-land has its own rich hues; and these rude stone walls that enclose the miserable bit of farm or garden are sur-

mounted by golden gorse. Even the far-reaching sterile hills, where the scant pasturage scarcely tints the barren rock, have their qualities of colour that a painter might observe. For the day is beautiful; the air is clear; and the sunshine falls so strongly that the shadows under the hedgerows or under a steep bank seem quite black—and not yet the opaque black that a palette would give—but a sensitive, deep-reaching, luminous blackness that reveals things within itself, and that is cut across, outside, by the sharp pointed spears of the iris, a brilliant deep strong green in the sunlight.

The solitary passenger by this mail-coach regards these things with a minute and close and mechanical attention; perhaps he forces himself so to regard them. He has come through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, as it were; there is a black cloud behind him, and he durst not look that way; he busies himself, and strives to busy himself, with the phenomena of the visible world around him. And while he fondly imagines that he is contemplating these phenomena with the calm

and dispassionate eye of an artist—looking at the waste bog-land, and the poor hovels, and the sad far hills, with a view to guessing at their value in colour—in reality he is reading human sorrow, and the tragedy of human life, into every sight and sound that meets him.

But the first glimpse of the broad waters of Bantry Bay made his heart leap with pain. Visions and dreams that had occupied days not so far bygone seemed to dazzle his eyes —for a moment, but only for a moment. With a terrible effort he put them away. He would not confess to that quick sharp quiver at the heart. He was studying this beautiful picture as John Ross might have studied it. Look at the great width of the sea, with its armlets stretching in between the sunny browns and greens of the headlands. So still is the summer air, so calm and clear is the summer sky, that the blue of these far-reaching arms of water is a dull and almost opaque blue—a sort of sealing-wax blue—looking molten and heavy in the spaces between the wooded islands and the rocks. The hills on the other side, that stretch away

out to the lonely Atlantic, seem desolate and uninhabited. It is a sad picture, despite the loveliness of the summer day. But if one wishes to lose oneself—to get away from the world—to seek out the secret haunts of nature, and find solace and forgetfulness there—surely these remote shores, these voiceless hills and glens may afford a resting-place for the tortured soul?

He had to encounter strange faces at Glengariff. At the pretty hotel there, which, from a distance seemed to be half-smothered among trees and flowers and shrubs, he found a number of the visitors sitting outside, some having afternoon tea at small tables, others playing chess, or smoking or chatting; and doubtless they would regard the new-comer with sufficient curiosity. No matter; he was soon inside; and there he asked if he might have a room for the night.

"Mr. Fitzgerald, I presume?" said the landlady.

"That is my name," said he, with some astonishment.

"A room has been kept for you," she said;

and Fitzgerald could only ask himself why he had been astonished, for indeed the thoughtfulness and kindness of those Chetwynds went beyond all bounds.

"I suppose," said he, "I can get the Castletown mail-car in the morning?"

"But you won't need that, sir," said the good landlady, "for the carriage is coming from Boat of Garry for you at half-past ten, if that is convenient. I was to give you the message from Mr. M'Gee. Mr. M'Gee has been down to Boat of Garry to see that everything is in readiness for you; and I was to say that he was very sorry he could not stay to meet you here, as he had important business at Kenmare to-day."

"Oh, indeed."

"Visitors' book, sir," said a waiter, opening a large volume that lay on the hall table.

"Oh yes," said Fitzgerald, and he mechanically took the pen and wrote his name.

Then he lingered, glancing over the other names on the page, as is the fashion of new arrivals. He had his finger and thumb on the leaf, as if he meant to pursue this aimless

enquiry; when all at once he seemed to recall himself; he shut the book hastily, and turned, as if afraid that some one had been watching him. Then he went to his room, and remained there until dinner-time. He sat at the open window, looking at the beautiful foliage, and listening to the birds; and trying to think of nothing but these. He would not confess to himself what sudden and frightful suspicion it was that had made him so hurriedly shut the visitors' book; nor yet would he ask what new weight this was on his heart—this terrible consciousness that, sooner or later, before he left the house, he would be irresistibly drawn to search those pages.

At dinner he sat next a vivacious little old gentleman with a thin dried pale face and a brown wig, an Englishman, whose pleasant chatting, if it was not very wise or profound, served to beguile the time. He gave Fitzgerald a vast amount of information about the neighbourhood. He had his views also.

"What is the highest form of human happiness?" he asked, abruptly.

"Killing a brace of ducks right and left."

said Fitzgerald, for the sake of saying something.

"Oh no. These are violent enjoyments, and violent enjoyments are invariably accompanied by violent disappointments. It is the attainment of peace and content, which is only possible after the wild passions and pursuits of youth are over; and what does it depend on? Sound sleep, mostly. I mean to live to ninety."

"I am sure I hope you may," said his neighbour.

"I think I shall. I see no reason to the contrary," said the cheerful old gentleman. "I cultivate happiness and health at the same time; indeed, I find them to be the same thing. The only stimulant I allow myself in the day—the only thing that rises a little above the level—is the dinner hour. I permit myself that; and find no harm in it. Now when I was your age, I did as most young fellows did at that time—that is to say, without being a drunkard, I drank too much. A brandy and soda in the morning; a pint of claret at lunch; perhaps a glass of Madeira

in the afternoon; then the usual wine at dinner. What was the result? There was no novelty in it. There was no pleasant stimulus. The system was too familiar with these repeated excitements. And so nowadays I drink nothing but tea or soda-water up till dinner time; and then I have my pint of champagne; and my whole system enjoys this unwonted stimulus; and perhaps I may even grow talkative, eh?"

"But about the sound sleep—you have not told me how you secure that," said Fitzgerald. So long as this old gentleman would talk, he was glad to listen.

"I will tell you; I should like to proclaim it from the house-tops," said the other, seriously. "It is by having an occupation for all idle hours; an occupation sufficient to fix your attention, so that you can pass a rainy morning without fretting; an occupation sufficient to distract your mind in the evening—I mean the last hour or so before going to bed—and yet leave no puzzling questions behind to disturb you. Now my occupation is to read carefully and strictly through, from one

end to the other, the *Encyclopædia Britannica* —not one of the new editions, which might have modern speculation in it; but the edition of 1812, in forty half-volumes. I am quite sufficiently interested for the moment in Abergavenny, in Abruzzo, in Abyssinia, or Aquilaus; but yet not so eagerly as to interfere with my sleep; and when I have got away through to the end of the fortieth volume, I can begin again with my memory free from a single fact. But this I allow myself, I must tell you. I allow myself the use of a number of small hieroglyphics that I put in as I go on; and when I come to one of them again I say to myself, 'Why, the last time I read this I was in Mrs. Scott's inn at Boscastle, and what a storm was blowing!' or perhaps another tells me that when I read this paragraph I was at Ben Rhydding, just come back from a stroll across the moors; or perhaps at the Bell Inn at Henley, when all the confusion of the boat-races was about——"

"You seem to spend a good part of your life in hotels," suggested Fitzgerald.

"All of it—the whole of it, my young friend," was the prompt reply. "Why should I have the trouble of keeping a house? I have that done for me by those who have had most experience of it of any people in the country. Where should I have peace and quiet if I were worrying about servants and smoky chimneys? Why should I bother about cooking? If I do not like the cooking, or the bedrooms, or the direction of the wind, I go away elsewhere; I could not do that if I were tied to one house and hampered with my own servants. I agree with Shenstone. I know where to find a warm welcome. I can fit my habitation to the season of the year; at one time I am in the Isle of Wight, at another in the West Highlands. I may say that England, Scotland, and Ireland form my house; and I have a noble staff of servants—in numbers, at all events—who please me tolerably well. And you—at your time of life one does not travel for pleasure. May I be so impertinent as to ask what your business or profession may be?"

"I don't know that I have any just at the

present moment," said Fitzgerald, absently. "I have been thinking of going to America."

"Ah," said his neighbour, regarding him with curiosity. "You know the saying 'America is here or nowhere.'"

"That is from *Wilhelm Meister*," said Fitzgerald (it was a wonder to himself how glad he was to talk to this old gentleman, in however mechanical a fashion: the journey had been a lonesone one). "And I never could understand *Wilhelm Meister*. But I suppose as it is an epigram it must be clever. What I know is that here the Government won't give you one hundred and sixty acres of freehold land for five shillings an acre."

"You mean to farm, then? Pardon me, but—but I should not have thought that would be congenial occupation. You spoke of Wilhelm Meister," said the old gentleman, in his precise and courteous way. "What do you think of Werther, then? He was a great favourite among the young people when I was a youth."

"I like him still less," was Fitzgerald's frank reply (though his eyes sometimes

wandered away, as though he were looking at other and distant things). "I don't like hot-house sentiment. I don't think a man could go on loving a woman whose eyes were quite cold and indifferent towards him—concerned about bread and butter, in fact. If she had once loved him, even before her marriage, that would have been different. I can understand a man going on through his life constant to his love for a woman who has once loved him, and whom he has lost. I mean," he added, hastily, "by death. I mean one who has been taken away from him by death; and whose memory is a life-long treasure. I don't pity him; I think he is lucky."

"What?" said the old gentleman, "lucky to have lost his sweetheart."

"Yes, before he found her out," said Fitzgerald, quite simply—and even absently. "Then nothing can upset his idol. She is always beautiful to him, and true; he can have no suspicion of her; and when she has been always good and true and believable, he thinks other women may be. That is some-

thing. That is, when she dies in time—before she has degraded herself—before she has shown him what lies women's eyes can tell——"

"I say, my young friend, that is a very extraordinary theory for one of your age to hold," said his neighbour, staring at him.

The blood rushed to Fitzgerald's forehead; he had been talking almost to himself.

"Oh," said he, hastily, "there is something in what you say, about America. Of course one would want a certain amount of capital. But the land along the Platte valley is excellent; and I fancy that these pre-emption grants are free from taxation——"

"But have you any practical experience in farming, may I ask?" said his neighbour.

Now Fitzgerald was so glad to get away from that other topic on which he had haplessly stumbled that he began and gave this old gentleman a very fair notion of the state of his affairs—of his struggles to obtain a place in the London literary world, and so forth. He named no names, except the names of newspapers.

"It is to me a very interesting story, for a reason I will tell you presently," said his companion. "May I ask if you chanced to meet Mr. Noel?"

Mr. Noel was the editor of a great daily newspaper in London, and his name was pretty well known.

"No, I never did," said Fitzgerald.

"Perhaps you did not apply to him?"

"No—I had no means of introducing myself—even if I had thought——"

"Ah. Well, you see, it happens that I am one of the proprietors of the *Daily Mirror*, and I should be delighted to give you a note of introduction to Mr. Noel."

Of course Fitzgerald expressed his gratitude for this friendly offer; but rather avoided accepting it. He had learned one or two of the lessons of life. His imagination was not so sanguine now. The time was over when a chance conversation in an Irish inn could suddenly reveal to him a roseate path to fame and fortune. And besides, what would be the use of an introduction? Supposing he were to be allowed to write for that

great newspaper, what then? For whom? Towards what end? Who was to care? He had what money he wanted; the struggle was over; he had no ambition to make his voice heard amid the discordant roar of London—even if it could reach all the way from the solitudes of Boat of Garry.

Nevertheless he felt very grateful to this old gentleman for the distraction his conversation had afforded during dinner; for it was with a renewed and agitated fear that he passed quickly by the small table in the hall where the visitors' book lay. For one brief second he paused, half determined to brave the discovery, and free his mind from this lurking and intolerable dread; and then again he turned, mastering his vacillation, and resolved to give way to no such weakness. Of what concern was it to him? Let the dead past bury its dead. He had put that black cloud behind him. His business was the present. And here, on this lovely summer evening, amid the quiet beauties of Glengariff, was there not enough to occupy his attention? He would do as these others

were doing; only he rather wanted to get away from them, and be alone.

He got a boat; told the boatman he might go where he pleased; and was glad to be away from the shore, and in silence. Was it because the silence was so intense that now and again some air of an old familiar song seemed to come floating across the abyss of time, speaking of other nights and other scenes that his heart remembered? This was not Inisheen; this was Glengariff. Look at the beautiful still bay; at the wooded islands; at the solemn hills. Far up in the north-western heavens there is still a yellow glow of twilight; here along the shore everything is pale and cold and clear. In under the islands the water is of a glassy blackness; but the ripples catch the glow from the sky; and the black is barred with sharp lines of gold. A heavy splash out there tells that a salmon has leapt; the young herons high up in the trees croak as they are getting their evening meal; in by the rocks, under the bushes, the gray wet back of an otter comes up again and again silently to the surface until he

finally disappears. Then they turn seaward (a white ghost of a heron rises from a creek and shows itself for a second or two crossing the shadows) and make away down by a Martello tower; the night deepening in silence; a faint gray mist gathering along the lower hills; the twilight still strong enough to show, far away, the large mainsail of a yacht lying at her moorings—a phantom thing on the dark expanse of sea. And then slowly home again, over the clear shallows; and as one nears the landing-place, a slight stirring of wind brings a scent of roses—from the hedge there. It is a gracious evening. The stars come out one by one; the silver sickle of the moon has arisen in the south; there is just enough of ripple along the shores to make a soft and continuous murmur. And the roses make sweet the night air.

But what was this that went through his heart like fire? He was standing by the rose-hedge alone—for nearly all the people had gone indoors—dreamily listening to the low murmur of the water. But this other sound? There were two people coming

along the road, and but vaguely seen in the gathering darkness; and they were quietly singing together one of Mendelssohn's duets. Did he not know it?—the pain, and the sweetness, and the longing of it! And then, somehow, a bewilderment seized him: surely if he were to hasten away at this moment—if he were to hasten away to Cork and ascend the hill and enter the small house there, he would find that all this black nightmare had only been a ghastly dream. It could not be that Kitty was a traitor—that she had gone away from him—Kitty whose eyes had looked into his, who had pledged her life and her love to him in the glen at Inisheen, who had trembled in his arms, and sobbed, and kissed him, as she bade him good-bye at the shore. He would escape from this frightful thing; he would go to Kitty herself. And the next second a sudden, strange transformation takes place; he is in a vision; Glengariff has disappeared; he is at Cork; this is Audley Place! Look—he opens the small iron gate, and goes up the pathway, and rings the bell. The sound

of the piano within ceases; it is Kitty's foot-step that is in the lobby. "Well, sir, have you come for your singing lesson?" "I have come for a great many lessons, Kitty." They go hand-in-hand into the warm little room; Miss Patience is absent; the piano is open. "Which one?" says Kitty. "'O wert thou in the cauld blast?' No; you can manage that pretty well. Some day, when literature gives out, we may have to sing that together in a concert-room; and then you'll see whether anybody else can give you a lead with the accompaniment as well as I can. No; we'll try 'Oh would that my love were whispered.' Now let my hair alone; and attend to your business; and please don't bawl as if you were at Limerick races; but sing as if you were singing to me—at night —and just us two in the whole world——"

[Surely, if these two people—no doubt young people fond enough of each other—who were at this moment coming along the road to the Glengariff Hotel, could have known what agony they were inflicting on one who wished not to listen but who could

not refuse to listen, surely they would have ceased their careless humming of the old familiar air.]

He is standing by Kitty's side. She strikes the first notes of the music; and he loses his voice in hers, so anxious is he to hear her:

> "Oh would that my love were whispered
> To thee in a single sigh;
> Or murmuring in sweetest music,
> On swift zephyr's wing could fly—
> On zephyr's wing——"

The music stops.

"Dear me," she says, "what are you doing? What business have you with that? Don't you see that's mine? I believe you are singing by ear; and not looking at the words at all——"

"They are not worth much when you do look at them, are they, Kitty?" he says.

"That is not my business, nor yours," she answers, with the asperity of a music-mistress. "We have got to sing the duet; you can criticise the poetry afterwards. Now, you come in at the proper place—and leave

my hair alone, will you? Miss Patience asked me if I had combed it with a furze-bush the other night. Now——"

And so they finish that verse, and get through the next very fairly. But presently, when they come to—

> "And even in the depths of thy slumber,
> When night spreads her shadowy beams——"

Kitty finds herself singing alone. She ceases, and turns round and lifts up her soft pretty black eyes in astonishment and affected anger.

"Well? What is it now? Why have you stopped?"

"It is so much nicer to hear you singing alone, Kitty; I don't want to spoil it."

"Am I to sing a duet by myself?"

"I don't care what it is, so long as you sing it."

"I thought you might have had enough of my singing by this time."

"Perhaps you will be thinking that I have had enough of you?"

"That's what you will be saying some day, at all events," she answers saucily.

"And soon enough. Oh, I know what men are. Sighing their lives out over a little bit of your hair; and then you marry them, and before you know where you are they wouldn't walk the length of a draper's shop to buy a pair of gloves for you."

"But you have not been married so very many times, Kitty?"

"Don't be absurd. I speak from observation. And I know you'll be just like the rest. But never mind; it's very nice in the meantime; and you're looking such a bonny boy to-night; and—and, in fact, I'm going to be very kind to you, as I always am, and make you miserable, and if you will have the goodness to fetch me that book over there, I will sing you something so very heartrending."

He places his hand on her shoulder.

"And do you really think, Kitty, that we may grow indifferent to each other?"

"Don't tease; but bring the book."

"I want you to look at me and say so. I know what you mean when I see your eyes."

She keeps down her head.

"For I have heard strange things since I went to London; but about women only. I have heard it said that a woman's eyes are always wandering; that if you look down a *table d'hôte* you will soon find that out; that it is not safe to leave a woman by herself who has a loving heart; that she is likely, in your absence, to become gently interested in somebody else——"

She removes his hand from her shoulder, with a quick gesture.

"It isn't true, Kitty?" he says, with gentleness.

"I know the man you mean—and I hate him!" she answers fiercely.

"It isn't true, then, that women are like that?"

And then—ah! the thought of it!—she leaps to her feet, and seizes his arms, and there is a proud indignation in the white, upturned, quivering face; and there is something like tears in the black, soft eyes, and the pretty lips are tremulous.

"Read my eyes, read my heart and my

soul; and say if you can think such a thing of me!"

And then—

But this dream of what was bygone was like madness to the brain; he could no longer think of it; and happily these two people had passed into the house, and he was once more alone with the silence of the night.

Even here he could find no rest; the darkness was too full of pictures. He passed into the warm light of the hotel; and in the hall met the old gentleman who had talked with him at dinner and who was now chatting with the landlady.

"Ah, here you are, I see; I have been wondering where you had got to. Here is the letter to Mr. Noel."

"Oh, I am very much obliged to you."

"You will find him a most excellent fellow; and it is not often I try his good-nature in this way."

"I think you are doing too much for a stranger," said Fitzgerald, frankly. "I know something of newspaper-offices. I know editors are not fond of letters of introduction.

Supposing that I were to begin and pester the life out of this poor man?"

"Oh, I am not afraid," said the old gentleman, good-naturedly. "Something in your conversation at dinner showed me you had an old head on young shoulders. You will see," he added, speaking in a lower voice, and, in fact, in a somewhat mysterious manner, "that I have written to Mr. Noel merely as a friend. There are a number of proprietors, you understand, and as our interests might be diverse, we have agreed never to intermeddle with the conduct of the paper, except on such large points as the board may be summoned to consider."

"I hope," said Fitzgerald, pleasantly, "that the declaration of dividends is one of those large points."

"Marvellous!" said the other, putting a finger on his companion's arm to emphasise his tragic whisper. "Marvellous. Not a word to a human soul; but last half-year the manager announced to us a dividend of forty-three per cent on the original capital! Think of that! Now, of course, we don't

want to intermeddle with a concern that is paying like that; and this note does not recommend you as a writer to Mr. Noel, but merely tells him that I had the pleasure of meeting you at the *table d'hôte* here, that you knew something of literary affairs, and asking to be allowed to introduce you. That is all. You understand?"

"Oh, perfectly. I am very much obliged to you."

"Although I am a pretty withered old stick myself," said the old gentleman, facetiously, "I believe in the infusion of new blood—so does our manager—a most shrewd and excellent man. 'New blood,' I say to him: 'When you can get it,' says he. Now I am off to my final hour at the *Encyclopædia*. Where was I? Oh yes, at *London:* the account of the great fire, very interesting, I assure you. But," he added, with impressiveness, "*not too interesting*. I shall not sleep any the less soundly to-night because I have been reading about the baker's shop in Pudding Lane."

"Good-night to you, then," said Fitzgerald.

"But not yet, if you are coming into the drawing-room. Of course you are; there are some charming young ladies there. I have my volume there, too; their chatting or singing does not interrupt me; on the contrary, is it not a pleasant variety to look up from Ancient Thebes or the wars of Alexander and see a nicely-rounded cheek and pretty eyelids bent over a book? I always keep my volume there, though once or twice the wicked young creatures have hidden it out of mischief."

So he went off and into the warm, bright little drawing-room; and Fitzgerald was left in the hall. He had a reason for lingering—which he dared scarcely confess to himself.

"You have a good many people here," he said, cheerfully, to the landlady or manageress, "for this time of the year."

"Oh yes, sir. It is rather a favourite time. Many people like to go through and see Killarney while some of the hawthorn is still out."

He was turning over the visitors' book, his face and manner careless, his heart throbbing with a nameless dread.

"Is Boat of Garry a pretty place?" he asked.

"Oh yes, sir; I believe so, sir; I have never been there myself."

He did not hear that answer. He had come to three names, two of them bracketed together; all written in the same hand—

Miss Romayne . . . }	Cork.
Miss Patience . . . }	
E. L. Cobbs . . .	Liverpool.

He shut the book quickly, without looking round; he dared not show the landlady his ghastly face. He took refuge in the drawing-room, concealing himself in a corner, with his hands clenched on the newspaper he held up before him: the letters he saw before him seemed to be printed in blood. And then there was a kind of suffocation in the air of the place; was not the night hot? Some people were laughing; it was a strange sound. A chord was struck on the piano; and there was silence. Two voices were heard—two girls' voices—one soprano, the other contralto—and what must they sing but "O wert thou in the cauld blast"? His clenched hands

were trembling; the agony was too great. But he managed to read on—such reading!—such blind, wild fixing the eyes on words that had no meaning—until the musical piece was finished; and then he slunk out, his face averted, from the room, and found safety, and coolness, and time to think, in his small apartment upstairs.

But even here, as he sat down, strange fancies that he strove to banish came into his head. Why did he look so intently at the window-sill, at the dressing-table, at the mirror? The mirror can reflect many faces; but no trace remains. This bedroom must have been breathed in by many a visitor; but here was the sweet fresh air of the night blowing in at the open window. What idle fancies were these? The room was but as another room. He got a book, held it up against the light, and began to read.

He read nothing. The window was still open; the soft night-air blowing in; and yet the room seemed to choke him. And then all at once he seemed to know that Kitty had occupied this room. She had kissed her

lover out there in the passage ; she had come in here to be alone with her perjured heart ; she had looked in the mirror to see whether her eyes had been lying as bewitchingly as was their wont. These were the eyes with which she had sought him out when, breathless and smiling, she had come down to the Cork station to see him away—glad, no doubt, that he was going, and knowing that he would trouble her no more. She had taken back her love, her pledged love from him ; but she could give him a basket ; and salad cut with her own hands ? Was she not kind ? Was she not generous ? Had she not a woman's thoughtfulness and pretty consideration and affectionate ways ? He could see her smiling, and kissing her hand to him, and waving her handkerchief, as the train slowly left the station ; she was thankful, no doubt, she had escaped ; she had got through the hypocrisy ; her eyes had met his, but he had not read down deep enough, nor seen the treachery of her heart.

The air of this room seemed contaminated ; he could not remain in it. Was it on that

window-sill there that she had leaned her arms, on the still morning, and looked out? Oh, her eyes were pretty enough: any one passing along the road and noticing her would say that was a charming enough face. Any kisses to sell this morning, fair young lady?—it seems these things are bought nowadays. Is the price high? Must one hail from Manchester, or Liverpool, or some such commercial place, before one can become a purchaser? Hearts, too: do they find quick buyers, seeing they are so easily transferable? Bah!—she is no woman fit for a man's love—throw her out to the dogs, the smirking Jezebel!

He puts down his book; he has not been reading much.

Why this contempt, then? Why this scorn of poor Kitty, who (when she was at Inisheen, at least) did her best to be loving? Poor little Kitty; the small, trembling, overfond heart mistook its strength. No doubt she wished to be steadfast and true. Perhaps she tried for a time. But she was a creature of the sunshine; the warm little heart went

dancing and fluttering on ; what was it to her that behind her lay a man's broken life ?

No, he could not remain in this room ; the objects in it were horrible ; the air stifled him. He went downstairs again ; got hold of somebody to whom he made the excuse of sleeplessness ; and so had the door opened, and went out wandering into the darkness.

And now a breeze had sprung up in the south ; and all the night was awake. The wind murmured and trembled through the dark branches of the trees ; there was a sound along the shore ; and the sad mother earth was listening to the wail of her daughter the sea. Only far away in the stars—those calm, and shining, and benignant orbs—did there seem to be peace ; if only one could reach them through the gateway of the grave.

CHAPTER II.

ALONE.

NEXT morning the little old gentleman with the dried-up face and the brown wig was standing in the verandah outside the hotel when the Boat of Garry carriage—a large open landau, with a pair of smart-looking grays—drove up to the door, and Fitzgerald came out. Master Willie, who had been taught by John Ross to observe the expressions of the human face as closely as the colours of palings and of Chelsea cabbage-gardens, instantly perceived that his friend and patron of the preceding evening was surprised—more than that, that he seemed to have some misgiving.

"This isn't newspaper work I am engaged on at present," said the younger man, promptly, as his luggage was being handed up to the coachman on the box. "I am

going as a sort of land-agent or surveyor, to see whether a house and a shooting down here are all right, before they are offered to a tenant."

"Oh, I see," the old gentleman remarked, as he scanned the turn-out. "He won't find fault with the carriage, at all events. A landau is the proper sort of carriage for this changeable sort of climate; but heavy, eh, on the hilly roads? They seem a strong pair of beasts, though."

"Good-bye," said Fitzgerald, as he shook hands with him. "If ever I have the courage to try the newspapers again, I may make use of the note of introduction you were kind enough to give me."

"It will be an easier experiment than going out to Nebraska for your 160 acres of land, eh? Don't you think so?"

Then Fitzgerald got into the landau; and when the near horse (whose name he afterwards discovered to be Wellington) had reared and pranced on the ground for a bit, off went both of them like a bolt from a bow, apparently well accustomed to the weight of

this spacious carriage. The morning was fine, though there was a strange luminous opacity in the air—a sort of thin sea-fog suffused with sunlight—that hung over the woods and hills like a tender bridal veil. The air was soft to the cheeks; the warm wind was from the south. If this were to be banishment, it was banishment to a very beautiful and gracious part of the world.

And indeed, as Fitzgerald lay back in the soft, blue-cushioned carriage, he had an uneasy sense that the whole performance was very much like setting a beggar on horseback. He regarded the two white buttons on the brown coat of the coachman; and wondered whether he could not induce the human being within that garment to be a little more companionable, and less elaborately respectful. So he hit on the device of adding a trifle to his Irish accent; and he perceived that, by slow degrees, the coachman, who was a good-looking man of about thirty, permitted a more friendly look to come into his eyes when answering questions. At last Fitzgerald said to him—

"What is your name, now?"

"Murtough Dunne, sorr."

"But what do they generally call you?"

"Murtough, sorr."

"Very well, then, Murtough; you stop the horses for a minute, and I'll get out and come up on the box; for I want you to tell me about the country."

"As ye plase, sorr."

So Fitzgerald got up on the box; but he knew better than to begin on the subject of topography. He praised the look of the grays. Wellington, he discovered, was the showier of the two, and always made a little fuss about starting; but Dan was the one for real hard work. Dan had taken the dog-cart sixty miles in one day—over bad country—and was as fresh as paint after it. Dan was his honour's favourite. But indeed—as appeared from hints continually cropping up in this desultory talk about horses, and carriages, and hay, and shooting-parties, and what not—his honour, that is to say, the late owner of the place, seemed to have had a great many favourites, both among the human

beings and the animals around him, and to have left behind him a reputation for constant kindness and consideration. He was quick-tempered, it appeared; but his wrath was over with a word; and there was nothing the people round about would not do to serve him and to please him.

"That made it easy for the keeper, then?" said Fitzgerald. "No trampling of nests in the spring—no chasing of leverets by the dogs?"

"True for you, sorr," said the coachman. "There was John O'Leary, up at the Knock-garvan farm, and he had a dog—sure, sorr, there never was such a rascal for hunting, and worrying, and shtaling—both bird and baste. What does he do but bring down the dog, wid a string round his neck, and ties him up in the yard, and laves word for his honour to shoot him or drown him as he plased. 'Bedad,' says Micky——"

"But who is Micky?"

"Sure the keeper, sorr! 'Bedad,' says he, 'his honour will do neither the one nor the other whin he comes home; and

wid your lave I'll get rid of the baste mysilf.'"

"And I suppose the gentleman up at Knockgarvan expected a little compensation?" Fitzgerald said, suspiciously.

Murtough grinned, and said nothing.

"How much was it?"

"I tink it was tree pounds, sorr, his honour gave him; and the cur not worth the sound of a sixpence!"

In this way Fitzgerald managed to obtain a large amount of information about Boat of Garry and its neighbourhood; and the long drive—through occasional woods, or along high and stony hill-roads (with always the far Atlantic in the south)—was rendered cheerful enough. He made it a matter of business to obtain these particulars. He had undertaken a commission, as it were. And he tried hard to devote his whole time and thinking to this duty; so that amongst enquiries about the price of oats, and the probable introduction of hay-drying machines, and the different kinds of nails for horse-shoes, and so forth, other and less immediate things

might be definitely shut out and forgotten. Was not this a new and strange experience for him—to be installed as master of a house that he had never seen? How would he get on with the other people about? This man seemed civil and honest, and was now rather more friendly, while always preserving a careful respect. And he could report that he, at least, had not been neglectful of his duties: the horses seemed in excellent condition; the metal of the harness was brilliantly polished; the carriage throughout was as spick and span as it could be—much more so than is at all common with carriages in remote parts of the country where they get rough and constant usage.

By-and-by, however, the sunlight seemed to withdraw itself from the thin mist; it grew darker a little; then the moisture in the air was felt in points; at last a fine rain began to fall.

"Will your honour be for going inside now?" Murtough asked.

"Oh no," was the answer. "But I will hold the reins while you close the carriage. I know the south of Ireland. Besides I have a waterproof."

And very soon he had to put on that waterproof; for the soft small rain now fell steadily; and the outlines of the hills and the reaches of the lake were blurred over or altogether invisible; and the skies were growing dark. Murtough had a waterproof also; but he did not seem to think this rain sufficient to injure his livery. So the pair of grays trotted on monotonously, or splashed through puddles; and the rain fell more slightly or more closely as the clouds came drifting over from the hills; and all the time Fitzgerald was interesting himself in particulars about the Boat of Garry household or asking the name of this or that feature in the ever-changing and widening and dripping landscape.

At length there was a sharp dip down from the high road, and they passed through an avenue of trees. Here the landau dragged heavily through the mud; and there was a pattering of big rain-drops from the branches. Then they swung into the open again; passed through an open iron gate; drove briskly along a pathway of wet gravel; and drew up at the door of the house of

which Fitzgerald was to be the temporary master.

It was a plain, square, two-storied building, with an unpretentious porch of wood and glass. The shrubbery around and the bit of lawn looked trim and well-cared for; there was no sign of neglect about the place. And when, leaving his dripping waterproof in the porch, he walked into the hall, and then into the dining-room (where there was a fire, despite the fact that the weather had been unusually warm, even for the first week in June) everything around seemed neat and clean and well looked after. There was not the slightest air of neglect about the place; on the contrary, one would have expected a trim house-mistress to make her appearance to welcome the visitor. There were preparations for luncheon on the table. There was a pair of slippers on the fender. Beside the easy-chair at the corner of the fireplace stood a smaller table, on which some books and old magazines were methodically arranged.

"I beg your pardon, sir," some one said at the door.

The voice sent the blood to his heart—it was so like another voice that he now regarded as being beyond the grave. He turned quickly. But this person was merely a quiet-looking, rather pretty young woman of about six or eight and twenty, whose black hair and blue eyes made him conclude she was Irish. But then he recollected. Was not this the English maid whose fellow-servants, according to Mrs. Chetwynd, had considered to have made such a frightful *mésalliance* in marrying the good-natured Irish coachman?

"I beg your pardon, sir," said she, in very pretty English. "I was having your things taken upstairs. Would you please to have luncheon now?"

"Oh yes," he said, "any time. I am in no hurry."

"I hope you will find everything to your satisfaction, sir——"

"Oh, I am sure of that. I am not particular."

"If you would be so kind as to tell me anything you would like different, we could get it. We have had two letters from Mrs.

Chetwynd, sir; and Mr. M'Gee has been here several times. I hope you will be comfortable, sir."

"Oh, no doubt, no doubt. You are Mrs. —Mrs. Dunne, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir. My husband said this morning he thought it would rain; and so I had the fire lit, sir, in case you might have some things damp."

"Oh, thank you, but I don't think there will be any need to keep up the fire in this warm weather."

"Thank you, sir," said she, and withdrew.

He went to the window. It was a pretty place, despite the wet. It was so quiet and still that you could not well tell whether the continuous "*sh—sh—sh*" outside was the falling of rain or the murmur of the brooklet that splashed along unseen, behind the bushes at the foot of the lawn. The rain, too, had made everything look even more richly green than it normally is at this time of the year—from the luxuriant rhododendrons, whose glossy star-like leaves were all shining wet, to the belt of trees, maple and

chestnut and ash, that made a circle round the place. But through these trees there were spacious openings; and through some you looked in one direction over broad meadows and one or two patches of wood, while in another direction a broad pale silver streak between the foliage showed where the shallow waters of a creek came up from Bantry Bay. And always, in this loneliness, was the murmur of the rain, rising a little as the wind stirred in the branches, and then again subsiding into a sort of semi-silence, in which one could hear the sharp twittering of birds or the lowing of kine at some distant farm.

Again there was a knock at the door; and he started. He wished this woman's voice had not that peculiar tone in it. He wished she had the croak of a raven. Was it not enough that this soft veil of rain was but as a screen that seemed to hide behind it the fancies and visions and pictures of other days? That is the saddest thing about rain; it makes the landscape look far away; it invites the imagination; the world looks

vague—just as the ghost of a woman's face may look, if you think of it through tears.

"Come in," said he, sharply.

It was Mrs. Dunne; and there was an older woman visible—bringing some things to a table in the hall. He turned to the window again.

Presently that pretty, startling voice said—

"Luncheon is served, sir."

"Thank you," said he, thinking she would go.

She remained, however, standing behind the empty chair. He went and took his seat.

"I beg your pardon, sir," she said, "but will you have champagne or claret? I have not opened the bottle yet. Mr. Frank had sometimes the one and sometimes the other."

At this Fitzgerald flushed like a school-boy. How could he explain to her that he was not Mr. Frank; that he was much more of a fellow-servant with herself? It was clear that these instructions from Mrs. Chetwynd and from Mr. M'Gee were putting him into an altogether false position.

"But I am not at all used to such luxury,

Mrs. Dunne," said he, good-naturedly. "Is there any beer in the house?"

"Oh yes, sir, I will fetch some. And they call me Kate, sir."

When she returned with the ale and put it on the table, he said (without looking up)—

"Thank you, Mrs.—Mrs. Dunne—that is if you don't mind—if it is the same to you—to have that name, from a stranger, you know. And I would not trouble you to wait. I am sure there is everything here. If I want anything I will ring."

"Thank you, sir," said she, with the same pretty politeness; and then she stirred the fire and left the room.

As he sat, moodily and dreamily, at this far too copious banquet, it seemed to him—or perhaps it was only a bit of sarcastic phantasy that he played with—that women were by nature really kind and thoughtful and considerate, so long as you had nothing to do with their affections, when they were as the tigers that slay. Think of Mrs. Chetwynd's solicitude about his welfare; her repeated injunctions; the proofs being visible

on the table here at this ordinary mid-day meal. He, as well as any, and better than most, knew with what trouble and even difficulty many of these things must have been procured at a remote country-house in the south of Ireland. Think of the anxious kindness of this poor creature who would have him consider himself quite as much at home as Mr. Frank. Kitty, even when her heart had gone away from him, when her eyes were smiling only to deceive him and get rid of him, she must needs rob herself of half her night's rest for the purposes of cooking, and come rushing and panting to the station with the salad that her own hands had dressed. That was the mission of woman, then? There they found themselves at home; were natural and trustworthy? There they were truest to themselves? It was an odd theory—but he left the food before him almost untouched; and went to the easy-chair and lit a pipe; but soon dropped that on the floor and went fast asleep, for he had not closed his eyes the whole of the previous night.

He was awakened by Kitty's voice (as he thought in his dreams) and he sprang to his feet with his face white.

"Oh, I beg your pardon, sir," said the English maidservant, about to withdraw.

"No, no; what is it, Mrs. Dunne? Do you want to take away the things?"

"It is only Micky the keeper, sir, who would like to see you, sir. But any time will be convenient——"

"Where is he?"

"In the kitchen, sir."

"Tell him to come along now, and we will go and have a look at the kennel."

"Very well, sir."

Micky, or Mick, as he was generally called, proved to be a smart-looking, clean-built young fellow of about two-and-twenty, with reddish-yellow hair, ruddy-brown eyes, and a face that could express more than his tongue. For he had come from one of the westernmost districts in Kerry; and his English was somewhat scant. Fitzgerald, on the other hand, had almost forgotten what little Irish he ever knew; so that the con-

versation that now ensued in the hall, about cartridges and the cleaning of guns, and what not, was conducted with a good deal of guessing on both sides. However, Mick showed himself shrewd enough; he quite understood Fitzgerald's monitions about the importance of keeping on good terms with the farmers and shepherds around; and when, in the little gun-room, they turned over the various drawers and cases and so forth—sad enough relics these were of the dead man—it was very clear that he had done his best to master his trade. The guns had been beautifully cleaned and carefully oiled and put away. Such cartridges as were there were well made. Not only that, but some sea-birds stuck up along the wall were of Mick's own stuffing; and they were very fairly done, considering the difficulty of the performance. Master Willie had found a companion just to his mind.

"The loicense, sir?" said Mick, as if his clear brown eyes conveyed all the rest of the question.

"Yes, what?"

"'Twas Misther M'Gee was axing would it be a gun-loicense or a kaper's loicense he was to be getting for me."

"What had you before?"

"Sure I had the kaper's loicense; but Misther M'Gee was saying mebbe you'd be shooting all the toime yourself, sir, and what would I be after wanting the game-loicense for?"

"What did you use it for before?"

But this took Mick some time to explain; the fact being that "his honour," as every one except the English maid-servant called young Mr. Chetwynd, had been away frequently during the shooting season, and on that account the keeper had had a license to kill game, so that an occasional hamper could be sent to London. Fitzgerald said he would have to settle that matter afterwards; and together they set out for the kennel — through the silent thin wet that seemed to hang in the atmosphere like a vapour.

He spent about an hour in the kennel and stable; and then returned to the solitary

room, and got a book, and sat down to read in the melancholy silence of the rain. But he was restless. The type before him got into a fashion of fading away; and pictures formed themselves in its stead. This would not do.

He threw down the book; and went out and put on his shooting-boots and leggings and waterproof. Then he got out the fishing-rod he had brought with him; and jointed it together on the lawn. Then he got his fly-book; and chose indifferently the first cast that came to hand, which he twisted round his hat. Thus equipped he set forth through the shrubbery, and made his way to the side of the small but rapid stream that came down from the hills through the valley to the salt water of the bay.

He had not stayed to ask what chances of sport there were. But the throwing of a fly would be sufficient occupation, he thought; one could not stay indoors the whole afternoon; besides, there would be practice—in case he might happen on some better fishing elsewhere.

So he made his way through the rank, tall grass and herbage (the best shooting-boots in the world could not keep out the wet) until he reached the side of the stream; and there he put on the cast; and with a short line threw the flies on the swirling water. It very soon appeared that if he only wanted to exercise his skill he would have ample opportunities; for the streamlet was narrow; long weeds grew down to the very edge; the water was rapid; and in the first three casts he got twice caught up. But when he had chosen his position better, and was a little more careful, he soon found himself catching fish—that is to say, small brown trout of about four to the pound. It amused him, and did no harm to them; nay, perhaps it was a benefit to them, for when they were flung in again they had learned a lesson in life, and would be more cautious in the future. And to him there was a certain variety in the occupation besides merely trying to dodge the tall weeds. To get at some of the pools and reaches of this sharply curving river he had to cross necks of land

that were obviously covered at very high tides with the sea water; and as these contained a considerable number of deep, peaty-looking holes partially concealed by the long grass, there was a possibility of his finding himself any moment up to the neck in mud. So he kept on—on this sad, dull day, with the soft rain continuously falling; discovering new pools; hanging up on weeds; landing small fish, and leisurely throwing them back again, until——

Yes, until there was a sound that made his heart jump—the shrill whirr-r-r-r of the reel! Up went the top of the rod, out went the butt, in a moment! Then he saw his opportunity—he floundered down through the bushes, and got into one of the shallow reaches of the river, where the water was not up to his knees; here he could deal with his enemy face to face. The fish had at first banged away down stream, but was now sulking under a bank; so he cautiously waded and waded, winding in his line the while, and keeping as heavy a strain on as he dared. If this was a grilse or sea-trout making its first

experiment into fresh water, he knew very well that it was as likely as not to resent this treatment and make a bolt back for the sea. And now there came between him and his prey a bend of the river where the banks came close together; and he was afraid it was too deep for him to wade. The fearful uncertainty of that moment! Look at the danger of getting on either bank—scrambling up among the tall weeds—if the fish should just choose that precious point of time——

Suddenly there was a slackening of the line, and for a wild second he saw a blue-and-white thing flashing in the air and splashing down again on the water. He dipped his rod. Quickly and sharply raising it, he felt no harm had been done. But now the line was appreciably slackening again, and as he rapidly wound it in, he found that the fish was heading up-stream, and must be approaching him. This was a serious situation. At last the rod was nearly vertical, though he was winding as hard as he could to get the strain on again; and he was anxiously looking at the point. Just at the instant of his greatest endeavour

he joyfully felt the strain returning—nay, he had to release his grip of the handle of the reel—he merely kept his fore-finger on the line, ready for any emergency—and then with another great whirr-r-r-r away went the fish again, round a turn in the bank; and the next thing he knew was that his rod was quite limp and vertical in his hand, with the line, minus the cast, flying high and idly in the air.

So far from disheartening him, however, this put a new aspect on affairs altogether; and he thought that the best thing he could do, before risking any further and similar losses, was to go straight away home, and sit down, and thoroughly overhaul his fly-book, and see that his casting-lines were in good condition. This, when he had changed his wet clothes, he proceeded to do; and the table in the dining-room was pretty well covered with fishing material when the English maid-servant entered.

"When would you like to have dinner, sir?" said the young woman.

"I do not care. It appears to me I have dined already, Mrs. Dunne."

"Mr. Frank used to dine at seven, sir."

"Very well, seven, if you like. But please don't take so much trouble as about luncheon; I am used to very simple fare."

"I am sorry we can't get any game at this time of the year, sir."

"Well, I know that."

She lingered and hesitated for a second or two.

"I wish, sir—I beg your pardon, sir—but would you be so kind as to speak to Micky?"

"What is it now?" said he, looking up for the first time—for he had been busy with his flies.

"The Fenians, sir. Some of them have been down here, and they are frightening the poor boy. He does not want to join them; but they have been threatening him—yes, and threatening the house, sir, if he does not join them——"

"Send him to me, Mrs. Dunne. I know the fellows."

Presently Mick appeared at the door of the dining-room, anxious-eyed.

"Are there any Fenians about here,

Micky?" said he, pulling at a casting-line. Kate Dunne was listening the while, though she pretended she was getting out the dinner-things from the sideboard.

"N—no, sir."

"I'm glad of that," said Fitzgerald. "I come from the Blackwater; and we know how to deal with them there. If any of the idle blackguards—I say if any of the idle bligards," he repeated, looking up, and speaking with more significance, "should come bothering about here, and trying to get decent young fellows into trouble—getting them to drink whisky and march about at night—you come and tell me. While I am here I won't have any strangers come prowling about—do you understand, Micky? Wasn't it you made up the No. 4 cartridges?"

"Sure it was, your honour!"

"Well, now, it's one or two of the No. 4 cartridges that I keep in my pocket at this time of the year, just for anything that may turn up; and I generally have a gun handy—especially at night. Now d'ye see now, if I catch any idle vagabond interfering about the

place, and threatening anybody, or talking about his marching and his counter-marching; I'm not going to wait to ask him his business; it's the Queen's guinea to a quid o' tobacco he'll get a charge of No. 4 shot catching him up behind; and ye weighed the shot yoursilf, Micky; and sure ye know it'll make the bligards jump?"

Micky went away deeply impressed. That Irish way of talking carried conviction with it. He sought out his friend Murtough the coachman; and, after a second or two of thoughtful silence, he said—

"Sure 'tis the new master can spake his moind. Blood and ounds, but I hope there'll be no murther about the house."

In the evening Fitzgerald dined in solitary state; the pretty housemaid, very quickly perceiving that he preferred to be alone, leaving things about handy, so that he could help himself. Thereafter he smoked and read. Towards nine or so she again appeared, bringing in the spirit-tray.

"Thank you," said he, looking up in a bewildered kind of way (for he had been

vaguely dreaming as well as reading), "I don't want anything more."

"If you would rather have brandy, sir," said she, "I think there is some."

"Thank you, but I never take spirits."

"Oh, indeed, sir. I hope you will find your room comfortable, sir. You will find a candle on the hall-table."

"Thank you very much."

"Good-night, sir."

"Good-night to you."

So thus had passed the first day in this new neighbourhood; and it had not been uninteresting. He was not thinking of any work now; he had no thought of turning these fresh experiences into literature. Nor had he any reflection that this place, so remote, and still, and silent, and beautiful, was just the place where Nature, if she were communed with in her mysterious haunts, might reveal her subtler secrets to the listening and sorrowing soul. No; he had got through a sort of day's duty; and that had kept him from thinking much—which was his chief good at present. He was glad to be able to do something

in return for the Chetwynds' kindness. No doubt his being there and occupying the place would reconcile the old lady to the idea of letting it. He would be able, he hoped, to give a good report of both house and shooting. And no more than the man in the moon, it may be added, had he the slightest conception of the purpose Mrs. Chetwynd had in view in begging him to be so kind as to go and pay a visit of inspection to Boat of Garry.

CHAPTER III.

GLIMMERINGS.

He was soon to have an inkling of that, however. After having been some little time in this still, silent, and beautiful place, occupied mostly in taking long and solitary walks by sea and shore, he wrote as follows to Mary Chetwynd :—

"Boat of Garry.

"Dear Miss Chetwynd—In the last letter I had from Hyde Park Gardens, your aunt seemed to think it quite enough if I remained here enjoying myself in idleness ; and the temptation to do that is sufficiently strong ; for it is one of the most beautiful neighbourhoods I have ever seen, and the people are very friendly. I think I ought to remind you, however, that if you wish to let the house and shooting, it would be easier to do that now than later on ; and really it

seems a pity to think of such a place remaining vacant. I am afraid a good many of the young birds were killed by the heavy rains in the early spring; but in some cases there are second broods in the nests; and there will be plenty of hares. Every one says the winter-shooting is most excellent; though Mr. Chetwynd does not appear ever to have spent a winter here. Everything about the house, as I wrote to your aunt, seems well-managed; the horses in excellent condition; the dogs not so good, as far as I can judge (the tenant should bring a brace of thoroughly-trained setters with him), and the new boiler will be in the steam-yacht next week. As to the prettiness of the place, of course you know about that as well as I; but if I hear of any photographer coming through by way of Glengariff to Killarney, I will take the liberty of getting him to come down here and take one or two photographs. These would not cost much; and they would help you in letting the place.—Yours faithfully,

"WILLIAM FITZGERALD."

This was the answer:—

"Hyde Park Gardens, Sunday evening.

"DEAR MR. FITZGERALD—I am in deep disgrace. Your letter seemed to me so reasonable that I thought I would venture, in the most roundabout way, to make the suggestion. Well, auntie, as you know, is not the kind of person to get into a tempest of indignation; but I could see she was really pained at the notion of taking money for poor Frank's place; and that she regarded me as a most unfeeling and wicked creature. Of course I did not press the matter. I suppose I was premature. But what I really do believe auntie means to do with Boat of Garry is to ask you to take it—probably with the name of Chetwynd as well. Perhaps I should not mention this project to you; for I have no authority; but auntie has been talking about it to Dr. Bude (who is a great friend of yours, by the way); and if he advises yes, the least you can do will be to send him some game. Auntie appears to wish that in the meantime you should wait over for the shooting, unless you find the place intolerably dull; and we both hope you

find the house and the neighbourhood to your liking; and that if you are writing any more papers like the 'Woodland Walk,' you won't forget to put something about Boat of Garry into them.

"Yours sincerely,

"MARY CHETWYND."

"*P.S.*—After all, on reflection, it seems to me that auntie may be right. I am afraid I should not like to think of poor Frank's place going away into the hands of perfect strangers. But as this is a mere piece of sentiment, I am not going to interfere in any way, or give any advice. M. C."

When he read this letter he was seated on a rocky knoll high up on the hillside, whither it had been brought him by a boy. Far below he could see the small house ensconced among the abundant foliage; the trim lawn; the belt of trees; the spacious meadow outside; and the curved arm of the sea—a silver white—that swept round as if to enclose the whole. Was it not a beautiful picture, then, under these skies of June?—

a desirable enough possession? Here, indeed, was a vale of Avoca, where one might pass the peaceful years away, quietly and equally, with the friends one loved best? But, strangely enough, he looked on the place with no longing eye. He did not crave for the shelter, the snugness, the indoor affections of a house. Here, alone, with the sad hills, and the clouds floating in from the Atlantic, he was more at rest. He watched the great and mysterious shadows moving along, and those hills growing darker and grander, or disappearing altogether behind the folds of vapour, and slowly revealing themselves again in altered lines; and in the face of this mighty phantasmagoria, human life, with all its fears and ills, seemed a petty and trivial thing. He watched the great sea darkening or lightening with the lowering or the lifting of the heavy skies. And sometimes, as it seemed to him, there was a sudden vision overhead; a break in the pall of white, and a glimpse into a far and unknown realm of intensest blue; and then a warmth and a golden glory spread around him on the

herbage and the rocks; and the clear singing of a lark sprang into the silence, far away down there over the waterfall and the glen; and the sea air coming over from the south grew so balmy and soft that it was delicious to breathe; one turned one's throat to it; and the touch of it on the cheek was like the touch of a velvet glove.

Look, now, at this new companion of his. In the perfect stillness of sea and sky and land, and while his eyes are far away, some quick movement near at hand tells him that he is not alone. A small rabbit, the very tiniest of baby-rabbits, a ball of brown fur has come quietly along, all unconscious of his presence, until it is within three yards of him. It trots here and there, with a leisurely ungainly tripping, nibbling the grass now and again, never looking up. And then suddenly it stands still; and the fat little ball of fur has great staring eyes—staring with observation, not fright; for very likely it has never beheld a human being before. The big, flat, gray eyes regard him unwinking; there is no movement. Then, with a little forward jerk of the

head, up go the long ears; and again the motionless staring. Then up goes the baby-rabbit itself on its hind legs; the fore-paws comically drooping; and again the steadfast stare at this immovable strange creature seated on the rock. Then, by some accident, he inadvertently stirs a hand or a foot—the eighth of an inch will do it; and at the very same instant the earth is left empty—there is only a glimmer of white disappearing into the brackens a dozen yards away.

By-and-by he makes out another living object apparently not much bigger than the baby-rabbit, coming up the hill by the side of the narrow glen, and as he makes no doubt that this is the same boy sent up with another message, he rises, puts the letter in his pocket and proceeds to descend. Sure enough, the shock-headed gossoon has a message; there is a gentleman waiting for his honour. What gentleman? He does not know. Did he come in a dog-cart with a white horse? That he did. And then Fitzgerald knows that Mr. M'Gee, the Bantry solicitor, has paid him another visit; and hastens down

through bracken and over stone walls until he reaches the road sweeping round to the house.

This Mr. M'Gee was a big, burly good-natured kind of man, with a sort of sporting air about him, who had really gone a good deal out of his way to make Fitzgerald's stay at Boat of Garry pleasant for him. And his present mission was to say (with profuse apologies for delay) that at last the steam-yacht, the *Black Swan* as they called her, had got her new boiler in, which was to increase her speed by two miles an hour, and all she wanted now was to get in a few tons of coal and a store of oil; and would he, that is, Fitzgerald, care to take coach and rail to Cork, and make the trip in her from Cork Harbour to Bantry Bay.

"Oh no; no, thank you," said Fitzgerald, hastily.

"Sure, 'twould be as safe as sitting in chapel," said Mr. M'Gee, with a good-natured laugh. "We'll wait for smooth wather; and if there's too heavy a swell when we come to Cape Clear or the Mizen

Head, can't we run back and put into Glandore?"

"It isn't that," said Fitzgerald. "I don't feel inclined to go to Cork just at present."

"I was thinking 'twould be a bit of variety for ye; for divil the much there is to do about here at this time of the year."

"The fishing is capital."

"The fishing! the fishing did ye say?"

"If you like to wait for lunch you'll have a bit of a three-pound sea-trout I caught in the stream there only yesterday afternoon."

"D'ye say that now! It's myself has tried it half-a-dozen times, and I might as well have been throwing a fly into me grandmother's taypot. But faith I'll stay to lunch wid ye, and give the ould mare a bit of a rest."

Master Willie did not say anything about the number of trout to be found in the adjacent stream; but at all events this particular one proved to be most excellent; and Mr. M'Gee proceeded to make himself very much at home.

"Katie, darling," said he to Mrs. Dunne

when she brought in the beer, "isn't there a glass of whisky about the house now?"

"I beg your pardon for forgetting," said Fitzgerald, "but really I am not sure who ought to play the part of host."

"Well, many's the evening I've spent in this very room with the poor boy that's gone; and a pleasanter companion or a finer gintleman there was not in the country," said he. "Thank ye, my good gyurl; and isn't there a drop o' hot wather about now? Well, sir, ye've a good ould Irish name; and I hope ye'll have a happy stay among us; and niver fear, ye'll be mighty plazed with the *Black Swan* when we get her round, and sure ye'll be able to run up to Glengariff whenever ye want, and the divil sweep her if she doesn't do her ten moils an hour."

The quite novel excitement of meeting a stranger had almost driven the contents of Miss Chetwynd's letter out of Fitzgerald's head; but when, after luncheon, they went out to the seat fronting the lawn, and had coffee there on the little marble-topped table, and lit their pipes, the quiet charm of the

place again stole over him, and he could not help for a moment wondering what his sensations would be if he were really the owner of such a delightful spot. Of course, it was out of the question. A more preposterous white elephant could not be imagined. Where could he find money to keep up such a house—to pay wages and find provender for the horses? It was like offering a crossing sweeper the use for the season of a three hundred ton yacht. Indeed he so clearly saw that this could only be regarded as a sort of pretty sentimental fancy on the part of Mrs. Chetwynd—as something so obviously outside the limits of practical possibilities—that he was very nearly mentioning it to this good-natured lawyer; but as Mr. M'Gee had for the moment dropped into a snooze, he forbore; and finally concluded he would say nothing about the matter.

The quiet was enough to send any man to sleep. The day had brightened up; there were wider deeps of blue between the ribbed-white clouds; and the mellow sunlight fell warm on the meadows and on the lawn, on

the glancing trembling green of the broad-leaved limes, and on the still yellower green of the drooping foliage of a swaying acacia. The air was soft and warm, and yet moist; and it was pervaded by a scent of all growing things—a general, vague, delicious perfume that perhaps came chiefly from the lush grass there not yet cut for hay. A curlew or two were stalking along the shore, where the bold white scimitar of the sea came in between the meadows. A blackbird shot through the rhododendrons, and the silence seemed to miss its suddenly-closed song. But there was always the plash and gurgle of the stream at the foot of the lawn; and sometimes the distant bark of a dog, or the rumbling of a cart, spoke of a life far remote from this enchanted enclosure, that seemed to be given over to sunlight and peace and the growing of green leaves.

The lawyer awoke with a start.

"Begorra——" said he.

"You were saying," observed Fitzgerald, just as if he had not been asleep at all, "that she was registered up to eighty pounds on

the square inch; but of course the boiler has been tested beyond that——"

"Faix, I believe I've been asleep," said Mr. M'Gee, rubbing his eyes. "'Tis no wonder, when ye get out of the worrld. What will ye be afther doing now, all the afternoon?"

"I? I am going down to the stream to see if I can't catch another sea-trout for my dinner."

"Good luck to ye, thin; and I'll go and get the mare out, for 'tis a mighty long drive to Bantry."

So that unusual feature of life at Boat of Garry, a visitor, disappeared; and Fitzgerald was left to the solitude and silence and dreamy loveliness of the place. In the afternoon, however, he caught a good sea-trout, and also a brown one of about three-quarters of a pound—a fair size for this small stream. And again he had dinner by himself; and thereafter he smoked and read as usual. By-and-by, when the moon was clear on the gravel walk, he stole outside; he had got into a way of doing that; the servants thought the

new master merely wished to have a breath of fresh air, after the smoke of the dining-room, before going to bed.

And perhaps it was only that. He walked along the gravel in the clear light (though the moon was now waning); and he listened to the croak of the heron and the cry of the curlew down by the sea. He went along to the road; climbed over a wire fence; and made his way up a steep bank where there was a clearance among the trees. When he got to the top he was on the side of a deep and almost black chasm—the wooded glen through which came down the little brooklet that passed by the end of the lawn. And there he sat down on the stump of a felled tree; and looked around; and was alone with the night and the stars and the moonlit world.

This glen was smaller and narrower than the one near Inisheen; but it was a far more lovely place; for above and beyond it towered dark hills—rising far and solemnly into the clear night sky. There was a more spacious view, also; of this broad silver creek running out to meet the wide waters of Bantry Bay;

and of wooded islands, and long promontories; and of the dusky shore beyond, that seemed to lie behind the moonlight and was half lost in shadow. Night after night he climbed up to this spot; and of course it was merely to look at the beautiful picture; and to listen to the strange, sad, distant sounds in the stillness. Sometimes a faint perfume of the sea came borne along by the slight stirring of a breeze; sometimes, in a dead calm, before any wind was moving, he thought he could hear a trembling of the great deep in the darkness, and a whisper along the shore. Sometimes, moreover, as he sat there, with the silent hills above, and the great sea beyond, a wild fancy got into his brain that he could hear a voice in the sound of the stream—the stream down there in the dark; it became quite plain — a human voice — so strange — so strange and clear — *Over running water: my life I give to you.* The voice sounded quite close: all trembling he would bend his head forward—might there not be two people there?—or only one voice? —the voice of a girl—who was dead, and

gone away from the world—a young girl who used to be associated with all young and beautiful things, like hawthorn, and blue speedwells, and sunlit mornings, when there was a freshness in the air? And then again there would be nothing but the aimless and meaningless murmur of the stream, down there in the ravine; and the awful hills and the sombre sea would have no speech or message for him; and what was the use or value of this throbbing, fretting, tortured insect-life between the dark, dead world and the cold and distant and pitiless skies?

CHAPTER IV.

TO THE RESCUE.

About this time there began to appear in the columns of a London daily newspaper a series of articles which very soon attracted the attention and curiosity of the public. They were a new feature in journalism; some went the length of saying that they were a new feature in English literature. They were called "The Occupations of a Recluse," and professed to give some account of the various pursuits incidental to a quiet country-life; but they were in reality a description of solitary rambles by road-side and sea-shore and stream—a succession of carefully-studied out-of-door scenes that had a quite unaccountable charm about them. For this way of describing nature was not the poetical way of bringing together similitudes; saying that one thing is like another thing, and inviting the imagina-

tion to hop the little differences. Nor was it the other way of giving an honest and trustworthy catalogue—a gamekeeper sort of catalogue—of the phenomena of the hedgerow or the wood, leaving the reader who has sufficient time, training, and patience to fill in the light and colour and background of the picture for himself. No; there was something strange in this way of looking at things. There was a minute observation, it is true, put down in the simplest of terms; and there was a certain atmospheric quality that made the picture clear and vivid; but there was more than that; there was a kind of sensitive, pathetic thrill in the writing; these sights and sounds that were so quietly and unobtrusively chronicled seemed interpenetrated by a subtle human sympathy—rather sad, perhaps, in certain of its undertones. Indeed, to some it seemed that this writer had got behind the veil; that even the sticks and stones and flowers had whispered to him in his solitude; that the silence of the hills had reached to his heart. And very soon—as we shall see presently—he began to abandon even the

pretence of writing about definite pursuits. The farther he was allowed to drift, the farther he drifted; until the papers grew to be mainly the reflections of a man who, whether it was a gun he held in his hand, or whether it was a fishing-rod, or whether he was merely looking abroad at mountain and shore and sea, continually found himself face to face with the mysteries of the world, and with the old and sad and insoluble problems of human existence.

Of course such a series of papers looked odd—at the outset at least—in the columns of a London daily newspaper. The editor of that journal was himself at first very doubtful; but something in the writing struck him; and, as his time and attention were then wholly engrossed by a Cabinet crisis, he shoved the manuscript into his pocket, and took it home and showed it to his wife, who, when all his anxieties and interests were confined within the sphere of politics, acted for him as the mouthpiece of the vain clamour of the other and outer world. Now this lady happened to be a person of very keen discrimination in literary matters; and

when she had read the first two of these papers, her judgment was prompt and decisive.

"This writing is quite extraordinary," said she. "There is a description of a frosty night settling down over a stretch of bog-land, that made me shiver to my finger-tips."

"It is not news; and it is a newspaper we publish," said her husband, doubtfully.

"I should not care whether it was news or not," said she, "so long as people were interested."

"It is very magazinish," he said.

"Why should the magazines monopolise literature?" she answered.

Well, the experiment was made; and the public, who don't care a pin's point about the traditions of newspaper-offices, seemed to like these quiet and clear pictures of country-life, and began to talk about them even amid the throes of a Cabinet crisis. At first, it is true, they were more obviously practical. There was a good deal of information about dogs and guns, about rabbit-

snaring and deep-sea fishing. Even the good Scobell was driven to send for a file of this journal (which he did not regularly see, as it did not express his political views) as he took his seat in the library of his club one evening after dinner; and so charmed was his imagination with some of these sketches that he suddenly exclaimed, "Damme, if I don't take a shooting in Ireland this year!" at the same time bringing down his fist on the table, to the excessive alarm of three old gentlemen, who had each been fast asleep in his favourite arm-chair, and who started up to see if the world had come to an end.

But, as has already been hinted, this new writer by slow degrees seemed to feel that he was being allowed a good deal of latitude; and he took advantage of it to frequently wander away from the ostensible purpose of these articles, and to insinuate, rather than to state, a sort of philosophy of human life which had some odd points about it. He seemed to say:—"In this strange transit through the world, from the unknown to the unknown, where should one most naturally

look for safe and close companions whose intimacy could not be filched away from us or altered by the fluctuating circumstances of life? Surely in the grand and beautiful things around us which we know to be permanent. The time is so short. Why seek to probe the unsearchable mysteries of the human heart; to secure and imprison the elusive; to stake one's happiness on so unstable a foundation as human affection? Is there anything so variable; so liable to change—nay, to cease? But if the beautiful things of nature were to become our friends and loved ones, then securely year after year could we greet the reappearance of the flowers; and securely day after day could we welcome the wonder of the dawn; and listen to the murmuring and soothing voice of the sea. The friend whom we had trusted might disappoint and betray us; loving eyes might grow cold and take away their love-secrets elsewhere; but he who had chosen the winds and the seas and the colours of the hills for playmates and constant companions need fear no change. The beautiful

human face would fade; nay, death might step in and rob us of our treasure; but the tender loveliness of the sunrise remained, and the scent of summer woods, and the ripple of the rivulet down through the spacious meadows. But then this companionship had to be wooed before it was won; the secret voice had to be listened for; the eye trained to know this wonderful and not evanescent beauty. To such a lover, secure in his possession, what evil could fortune bring? Friend and sweetheart might prove false; but there was no discordant note in the music of the lark; the suspicions and envies and enmities of mankind might appal, but there could be nothing to doubt in the clear, beautiful, blue eye of the speedwell; and even those who had lingered in the fight, until sorely stricken there, might find solace in retiring to these solitudes and seeking out these secret companions; letting the seasons go by peacefully, to the appointed end. '*Then are they glad because they be quiet; so He bringeth them unto their desired haven.*'"

All this was insinuated rather than preached; and it was only here and there that some finely-attuned ear caught the undernote of sadness, and perhaps guessed at its cause. Of course the bruit of these articles reached the house in Hyde Park Gardens; and Miss Chetwynd, who was not a diligent student of newspapers, and had, in fact, missed them, had to hunt them all out one afternoon and read them over to her aunt. What surprised her was that mere sketches of sport, as they seemed, had the effect more than once of giving her a choking at the throat; but nothing was said by way of criticism either by aunt or niece, for the reading was just finished by dinner-time.

At dinner Miss Chetwynd herself introduced the subject, and asked if any one knew who had written these papers.

"I don't," said Dr. Bude, "but what I do know is that it is a thousand pities that fellow is thrown away on literature. Literature does not want him; science does. I can assure you, my dear Mrs. Chetwynd, that an accurate observer is a very rare bird indeed—far more

rare among men of science than is supposed. There are so few who will take the trouble to look patiently; they must jump to their theory at once. What does literature want with that kind of observation? Literature should deal with the mind—with emotions That fellow, now, should be set to work to observe the habits of beetles or birds, or the action of the tides, or some useful thing like that."

"I confess I was disappointed after all the talk," said Professor Sims, looking over his gold spectacles. "I glanced at one or two of the papers; and found them inconsequential. You began with wild-fowl shooting, but got on to Shakspere and all kinds of things. Then he seemed to me to be interfering with the proper business of the artist—describing what ought to be painted. What is the use of describing the silvery waves that wind makes on a field of long grass?—every one can see that for himself."

"Every one may not be in a position to see it," said Miss Chetwynd, in her gentle and yet pointed way. "This is bringing the picture indoors for you."

"That is not to be described in words—that is for an artist to paint," continued the professor.

"Could he?" she said, quietly.

"But there is something to be said," Dr. Bude interposed again, "for his theory that the eye should be trained to observe the beauty of all manner of simple things, so that you may increase the value of life. That is practical and sensible, it seems to me. Even if you don't give science a lift, you can make a country walk more interesting. He seems to have picked up some curious illustrations of the morphology of plants; though I imagine he has no very minute acquaintance with botany. You have read the papers, Mrs. Chetwynd?" added the tall, lank, dark man.

"Mary has just finished reading them to me."

"What is your opinion then? What is the writer? A man of science excusing himself for idleness? A philosopher taken to shooting snipe? Or an artist taken to literature because his pictures won't sell?"

"I am sure I don't know," said the old lady, rather hesitatingly, and with none of her usual sprightliness, "I was thinking when Mary was reading them that—that if my poor boy had taken to writing, most likely that was the kind of subject he would have chosen to write about. I liked the papers. They seemed a little sad sometimes—at least, wistful and strange. There is a kind of remoteness about them."

"What is your opinion, then, Miss Mary?" he asked.

Mary Chetwynd started slightly; she had been listening with downcast eyes.

"I?" said she, somewhat slowly. "What I think is that they are written by a man whose heart is broken."

Indeed she seemed preoccupied during dinner; and when the people had gone she went quickly back to the drawing-room, where she had left the cuttings from the newspaper, and set to work to read them carefully over again. Her aunt followed her in a short time, and found her deeply engaged.

"You have no more of the newspaper-articles to read, have you, Mary?"

"No; I was only glancing over them again."

By-and-by she looked up; but the old lady could not see that her niece seemed a little agitated.

"Auntie, surely you must know who has written these papers?"

"I, child?" said Mrs. Chetwynd, absently. "Well, I was dreaming about them. I think he might have written them."

"But, auntie, don't you recognise the place? It is Boat of Garry!"

The old lady sighed.

"Yes, that is what he would have written about—no doubt—the place he was so fond of."

"But, auntie, these articles are written about Boat of Garry! Don't you recognise it all—the creek, and the glen, and the islands, and the sea? Why, the acacia on the lawn is there; and the little marble-topped table; it is like a photograph. Mr. Fitzgerald has written these articles."

"Mr. Fitzgerald? Yes, I should not wonder," said the aunt, though she was obviously still thinking of the nephew whom she had lost. "He is very clever. I suppose he began to write early. I suppose it wants training. But I think—Frank—could have written them."

"What I am thinking of is this, auntie," said her niece, with some touch of feeling in her voice, "that if these articles are written by Mr. Fitzgerald, we have no right to ask him to remain in that loneliness. I—I—suppose he must have met with some sorrow; there it is in every line. I say we have no right to ask him to remain there. I am certain he wrote those papers; didn't you see the reference to the heronry at Glengariff?—and he has put in Bearhaven as clear as can be. And if—if he is in trouble—no matter what it is—it is not for women to let him be there all by himself—eating his heart out in solitude. It isn't human. I'm sure, I never thought how solitary the place would be if one were there alone until I read those articles—we always had plenty of society.

It must be dreadful—doesn't it sound dreadful, auntie?"

"Oh no, Mary; he seems so pleased with the birds and the different things around him—— So you think that is Mr. Fitzgerald? Dear me! he has become quite famous, though no one knows his name."

"They'll know it soon enough."

"And that is his life at Boat of Garry that you have been reading to me? Yes, it is like the place too—the gun-room even, and the stuffed birds. You must read them all over again, Mary. Then it was he who saw the young rabbit trot along and tell its father and mother? That was very prettily written; now that I think of it, it must have been in the wood beside the glen, just over the wire fence; I wonder I did not notice before how like it was to the place."

"But you don't seem to understand what I say, auntie; you are so full of dreams and pictures; and I am in the main responsible for Mr. Fitzgerald going to Boat of Garry—and—and—something has got to be put right, auntie."

"Well, then, child, I don't know what you mean, I confess it," the old lady said.

"Mr. Fitzgerald told me something," said Miss Chetwynd, with an unaccustomed flush on the clear cut, intelligent face, "before he left for Boat of Garry; and I guessed more. Do not tell him so, auntie—don't breathe a word of it—but I fancy he has been in some trouble; and that solitary place must have been a dreadful place to be in. I should have thought of it. It was my fault. But I thought if he were there for a time you would get accustomed to the notion of some friend or other occupying the place; and then that you might let it."

"I have asked you not to speak about that, Mary. I can have only a few years to live; and if for that short time I choose to do what I wish with my own——"

"Auntie dear, don't speak like that to me!" the girl said, going to the old lady, and putting her hand on her shoulder. "Surely you know it was not for my own benefit that I thought of it. It is not money that is likely to come between you and me, I hope."

The aunt took the girl's hand and patted it.

"No, no. You are a good child; I wish you were more saving of your money. Now what is it you want me to do?"

"One of two things, auntie dear. After reading these papers, I am quite distressed to think of Mr. Fitzgerald being there in that loneliness he describes; and I want you to ask him to come back at once."

"Child, I want him to have the place! To whom else could I give it? Who else could have found out the charm of the neighbourhood and written like that? No; I have thought over it, Mary. I could neither sell nor let Boat of Garry; and I would not have it go to the Lawrences, to have all those ill-bred young cubs stamping through my poor Frank's rooms; and what good would it be to you?—you would marry and give it away to somebody I know nothing about."

"If you please, auntie dear, what I have is quite enough," said the tall young lady, somewhat frigidly.

"Oh yes, I know; and anything more you might have you would fling away in

Whitechapel," said the old lady, with a smile. "Well, then, why should Mr. Fitzgerald come back? Why should he not become familiar with the place? Why should he not stay for the shooting?"

The niece remained silent for a minute or so.

"Well, then, there is another thing you must do," she said. "I think you and I might go over to Boat of Garry."

"To Boat of Garry!" said the old lady, rather faintly.

"Very shortly now," said Miss Chetwynd, cheerfully, "everybody will be leaving town; and my poor old auntie will have nobody to bring her all the wicked gossip. Why should not we go too?"

"To Boat of Garry, child?" said the old lady, almost reproachfully.

"It is not like you, auntie, to think of refusing to comfort a friend in distress," said her niece.

"But what do I know of his distress?—and what could I do, since I am not to breathe a word about it?"

"Well, auntie, I will tell you the truth," said the girl frankly. "My conscience is not quite clear. I was mainly responsible for the arrangement; and I am afraid we have been rather cruel. I should like to see how things are going at Boat of Garry; perhaps there will be no need for us to remain; we could pay a short visit and then go on to Killarney. I should feel more at ease. I am afraid Mr. Fitzgerald has got into a sort of morbid state, through being all alone there. That may be very good for his literary prospects, and people may begin and talk about him now, and make him famous; but I would rather have nothing to do with the great god Pan and his fashioning of the reed by the river."

"You are asking a great deal from me, Mary," said Mrs. Chetwynd, after a while.

"I think I am asking what is right, auntie."

"It will be all the old sorrow over again," she said, absently.

"Oh no, auntie, not that; it will only be beautiful memories now. I am sure you would like to see Dan and Wellington again,

and Murtough and Kate, and the Ghoul, and old Father Time, and the children up at Knockgarvan."

"It is a terrible thing going into an empty house, child."

"Oh, but it won't be empty, auntie!" said her niece, cheerfully. "We will have the Ballykilloge Barrys over, to show Mr. Fitzgerald, if he is to have the place, what it can contain; and we must drive to Kenmare, to see the old General; and wouldn't Murtough be glad to take us on to Killarney?"

"I never thought to see Boat of Garry again," said the old lady, wistfully.

"Indeed, auntie, if I were going to be so munificently generous as to make a present to a friend of a house and garden and shooting lease, and horses and carriages, and all the rest of it, I do think I should want to see how he liked the place, and if he was properly grateful. How do you know that Mr. Fitzgerald would take it? How do you know but that he sees nothing in the neighbourhood?"

"You can judge by these articles," said

Mrs. Chetwynd; but there was a yielding smile on her face.

"You will be able to judge, auntie, when Mr. Fitzgerald drives with us from Glengariff; and then you will see whether we have been too cruel in condemning him to such a solitary banishment. Now that's settled, auntie; and there is not to be another word."

CHAPTER V.

AT BOAT OF GARRY.

MARY CHETWYND read and re-read the "Occupations of a Recluse" until every searching and sensitive phrase seemed to find an echo in her heart; and when at last, one morning towards the end of July, she found herself standing at a window in the hotel at Glengariff, looking out on the beautiful calm bay and the woods and the mountains, it almost appeared to her as if a dream had become a solid reality. For the Recluse had written a good deal about this neighbourhood, though not specifying names; and she recognised the place now, not as she had known it in former years, but as transfigured by the new light and colour he had conferred upon it. It was the dream-picture become real; here were all the points of it—the rose-hedge, the little landing-stage, the wide water, the

Martello tower, and the far ranges of the hills. The place had a strange interest for her. It was something other than the Glengariff that she used to know.

Her aunt came into the room.

"I wonder whether Mr. Fitzgerald will come with the carriage," said the niece.

"I have been wondering," said the old lady, doubtfully, "whether we should tell him that we know of his having written these articles."

"It cannot be long a secret; everybody is certain to find out."

"It needed the interposition of a Cabinet Minister before we could make sure," said the aunt, however.

"I was sure from the beginning, auntie. It was only you who must needs go and get Dr. Bude to beg Mr. —— to ask the editor of the *Daily Mirror*. And all that trouble for nothing—you ought to be ashamed of yourself, auntie! Any one could see the papers were written about Boat of Garry."

"Scold yourself, Mary Chetwynd; don't scold me," said the old lady. "There was

no trouble about it. You remember what Dr. Bude said the moment I asked him?—that it was difficult for newspaper editors to get at the secrets of Cabinet Ministers, but that the reverse of the process would prove to be easy enough. And a pretty thing it would have been if we had come all this way on a mission of charity and compassion, and found that it was not Mr. Fitzgerald at all who had been writing in the newspapers—what would you have said then?"

There was a rumble of a carriage below in the road.

"Oh auntie, come quick," the niece cried. "Here are Dan and Wellington; and Murtough; and here is Mr. Fitzgerald, too—but what is he doing on the box?"

The old lady went to the window; and when she caught sight of the empty carriage, she inadvertently put her hand on her niece's arm, without saying a word. Then she turned away—her eyes full.

"Oh, I know," said Mary Chetwynd, cheerfully (though in her heart she guessed that Fitzgerald had out of delicacy refrained

from presenting himself to the old lady as the occupant of her nephew's place). "I know. Of course you must see the scenery so much better from the box. Of course that is it. Now, auntie dear, are you quite ready? Are all your things sent down?"

"I think so, Mary," said Mrs. Chetwynd, when she had recovered her composure. "You—you must make apologies to Mr. Fitzgerald for our interrupting him. We shan't stay long. He may have his own friends coming for the shooting. We don't want the carriage to take us to Killarney, if you wish to go back that way. We can hire."

"I don't think you would get Mr. Fitzgerald to agree to that, auntie," the younger lady said, quietly.

Fitzgerald was in the hall when they went downstairs; and he came up and shook hands with them; and said that their luggage was all in the carriage; and were they ready? In this partial dusk, he did not seem changed at all, except perhaps that his manner was somewhat grave. And he rather avoided

observation, as it were; he waited until they went out; and then followed.

But when Mrs. Chetwynd and her niece got into the carriage, they found that the main part of their luggage had been placed on the two seats opposite them, leaving no further room. The Boots of the hotel shut the door.

"Leave that open," said Miss Chetwynd, almost angrily. "Murtough, why is all the luggage down here? Mr. Fitzgerald, they will make room for you in a moment."

"Oh, thank you," said he, going round to the other side. "I will get on the box."

"Certainly not," said she, with promptitude. "You must have seen everything that is to be seen about here many a time. Murtough, take these things up beside you. See, Mr. Fitzgerald, here is your seat cleared. Don't you think that auntie and I have had enough of each other's company during such a long journey?—and we have all the gossip of the neighbourhood to get from you. I suppose old Father Time has a dozen more complaints about the Knockgarvan children?"

So Fitzgerald had to take his seat inside (the previous arrangement had been a cunning device of his own) and away they drove. For a time there was a little embarrassment. He was unaccustomed to new faces; he would rather have been on the box. Then Mrs. Chetwynd had got it so clearly in her mind that he was already the actual owner of Boat of Garry that she kept making little ingenuous excuses for their intrusion. But very soon the light and pleasant humour of Mary Chetwynd, and the clear frankness of her eyes, dispersed these awkwardnesses; and Bantry Bay and all its surroundings began (for him, at least) to assume quite a new and cheerful aspect. Boat of Garry, too: did he not know that the old gardener, with his stoop, and his long hair, and his scythe, was familiarly spoken of as "old Father Time?" Had he not observed how Ghoul-like was the engineer, stoker, and captain of the *Black Swan*, when he raised his head, all smothered in coal-dust, from the yacht's bunkers, and glared through his huge, brass-rimmed spectacles? This lan-

dau: had no one told him it was properly called "the Ark;" especially in wet weather, when its vast capacity could have transported half the neighbourhood safely through the rain? Perhaps he had never heard of H.M.S. *Coalscuttle?* At all events, she said, she was pleased to see that the Ghoul had not blown him into the air.

"I think it is very wicked of Mary," said the old lady, "to come and throw ridicule on everything, and make you think light of the place. Perhaps—perhaps it is from old association, but I consider Boat of Garry very pretty."

"Who could say otherwise?" he answered. "It is a beautiful neighbourhood."

"But a bit lonely?" said Mary Chetwynd, timidly.

"Oh no."

She raised her eyes in astonishment.

"You don't find it lonely?"

"Not in the least," said he, simply. "I mean—that is—well, perhaps it might be called lonely—but I find the solitariness of it its chief charm, I think."

She was silent for a second. Then she said good-naturedly—

"Auntie, what do you think of that as a compliment? Why, Mr. Fitzgerald, we thought—we imagined—that you might be rather lonely here—and—and—we thought of giving you the pleasure of our company for a week or two—I mean a few days——"

She was clearly embarrassed; but there was a humorous smile on her face all the time. Then she looked up with her frank clear look.

"I will confess the truth, Mr. Fitzgerald. My dark and nefarious scheme has failed. Auntie won't let Boat of Garry——"

"I don't wish it even talked about," said the old lady, but without sharpness.

"And so you see all my plotting and counter-plotting has only ended in your having been banished away from humankind for all this time——"

"But Boat of Garry is not such a howling wilderness, Miss Chetwynd," he said, with a smile. "Humanity exists there as elsewhere; and human—folly, shall we say? You don't

know what tragic passions may be smouldering in all that quiet. Murtough," he said, lowering his voice somewhat, "has discovered that a man at Adrigole made Kate an offer of marriage before she married Murtough——"

"I know. She came to me about it. Why did the stupid girl not tell her husband? What harm was there in that?"

"Why, none. Only the pitiableness of it," he said, absently. "It is merely the old story. When you see three jackdaws flying along together in spring-time, you know what a story of jealousy, and hatred, and madness that means; and how one poor chap is doomed to an inevitable fate. But it appears that the gentleman from Adrigole, having recently taken to drink, and idleness, and Fenianism, and so on, is now desirous of renewing his acquaintance with Kate; so there is to be a tremendous head-smashing when he and Murtough meet."

"I will put an end to that," she said, promptly, "for I know Pat Carey's master."

"I am afraid Pat Carey hasn't any master

to speak of now," said he. "But Murtough can hold his own."

For a time there was silence; and only the driving through the delicious air; and the opening out of the beauties of the far-reaching Bay. Mary Chetwynd was afraid she had said too much about his loneliness. She could not explain to him, here and now, what she had been guessing about him from these writings. She had been listening to inner secrets when she was reading those papers. Now everything seemed so ordinary and matter-of-fact—as he pointed out where the coal-smack had come to grief; or asked Mrs. Chetwynd if she had read Professor Sims's lecture; or got Murtough to stop the carriage so that he could get out to walk a steep part of the road. And yet, sometimes, when he was absently looking away over the wide expanse of water, there was a look in his eyes that told her something she had only imagined, and that convinced her that this visit on the part of her aunt and herself was not so much amiss.

When they swept round the gravel drive and drew up in front of the house, it was Miss

Chetwynd's aim to make a rare bustle so that her aunt should have no opportunity of indulging in sad recollections. Sure enough, here was old Father Time, with his scythe, just finishing off the lawn; and here was the pretty Kate, all smiling and pleased; and Mick was sent to bring the dogs; and the Ghoul was to be summoned to report about the new boiler. But indeed Mrs. Chetwynd did not seem to mind as much as had been expected her entering this house. It was far from being an empty house. Everything was noise and turmoil and confusion. And when at last something like order had been restored; and when the three sat down to lunch, Mrs. Chetwynd, so far from being dejected, said, with a smile on the pretty, bright, old face—

"Why, Mary, this is quite like old times."

The luncheon was not a sumptuous one; but the old lady was obviously highly pleased —with something or other.

"Your telegram, Mrs. Chetwynd, came late last night," Fitzgerald said, "and I had to get away early this morning, or I should

have tried to get you a sea-trout or a brace of wood pigeons, or something."

"Oh, but this will do capitally," she said. "If Kate would only let us have some wine. I hope you found the wine to your liking, Mr. Fitzgerald?"

"I—I have no doubt it is excellent," said he, flushing somewhat.

"But you don't mean to say you have not tried it—all this time?" said she, staring.

"The beer is very good indeed," said he, evasively.

The old lady looked at her niece, as if to say, "There is something to be amended here;" but she said nothing.

Then she began to cross-examine him about his impressions of the place, and his pursuits, and so forth, just as if she had never heard about the "Occupations of a Recluse." Did he like the situation of the house? The shooting promised to be good this year? And how about the winter—would it not be a terribly dull place in winter? And she was very much surprised that he had not made any use of the *Black Swan*.

"I don't know much about steam-yachts," said he, "but I suppose it costs a good deal in coals before you can get steam up?"

"A trifle—a mere trifle," she said. "Surely it was not that that hindered you?"

"I thought if you were letting the place it might be as well to have a full stock of coals in the boat," said he.

"Never mind, auntie," said the niece. "You and I and Mr. Fitzgerald will all have a famous trip to-morrow, if the day is fine; and we will see what the new boiler can do."

"Not I," said the old lady with decision. "You two may go if you like. I wish to end my days in a peaceable kind of way."

"Mr. Fitzgerald," said Miss Chetwynd, "have you ever steered a small steam-yacht?"

"I have never been on board one."

"Well, the sensation will be a new one for you—you must not miss it. You will have the pleasing impression that a wild beast has run away with you; and that you haven't the least notion against what it is going to rush. Then the Ghoul is generally

below at his fires; and I suppose you don't know much about the navigation at Bantry Bay?"

"Nothing whatever."

"This is still more excellent," she continued gravely. "And when you see the finger of the dial informing you that you are about twenty pounds above the registered pressure, you don't know how to let off the steam, I suppose?"

"Certainly not."

"Capital—capital. It will be the greatest enjoyment of your life. The Ghoul will be below; pressure will be 100 lbs. on the square inch; the wild beast will be running away with you; and you don't know where the rocks are. And yet they say that Boat of Garry is a sleepy, unexciting sort of place!"

"If you don't mind, Miss Chetwynd, I would rather leave the management of that wild war steed to you."

"To me? Oh no. When there is a man on board, of course the man steers. It isn't a woman's place."

"But suppose the man prefers to stay on shore?"

"Then you are afraid?"

"Yes, I am."

"I thought men never acknowledged that."

"It does not much matter whether they acknowledge it or not. If you put a man on a railway-engine; and start it; and send him careering along the line without any power to stop; and then if you ask him whether he is quite happy, and he says 'Yes,' you can judge for yourself whether he is a truthful person."

"Besides," continued the young lady, in the same calm and placid manner, "you know, you have to get the yacht out of the creek first; and the deep channel is about a dozen yards wide; and it twists between rocks; and the currents are fearful."

"Mary Chetwynd!" said her aunt angrily; and then she turned to Fitzgerald. "I don't know what has got into her head; but she seems determined to put you out of conceit with the whole place. The yacht is as safe as sitting in that easy-chair—why, look at

the new boiler! And it is most delightful to be able to go away on a perfectly still day —when an ordinary yacht would be unable to move—and go as far out as you please, and have luncheon there, and come back just when it suits you. I would go with you myself to-morrow——"

"Only——?" said her niece.

"Only what?"

"I wanted to know what the excuse was to be this time, auntie dear," said the imperturbable young lady.

"But I mean to go," said Mrs. Chetwynd, valiantly.

"Now, you know very well, auntie, you are as sensitive as a cat; and the least speck of dirt on your face or on your hands makes you fidgety and miserable; and when H.M.S. *Coalscuttle* does take it into its head to throw up a cloud of wet soot at starting——"

"But we can go below until she has started!" the aunt said.

"Who is to steer, then?"

"Mick can steer."

"He knows no more of the rocks than the man in the moon. Besides, would you miss the expression of the Ghoul's face when he gets to the Narrows?"

"Come away, Mr. Fitzgerald," said the old lady, "and we will have coffee outside. If you stay here any longer Mary will persuade you that sea air is poisonous, and that Boat of Garry is celebrated for small-pox."

Now this fighting, which had been brought about of set purpose by Mary Chetwynd, had the desired effect of tying down the attention of the old lady to the affairs of the moment; and it was wonderful with what little concern—how easily and naturally—she now took her accustomed seat on the bench outside the porch and looked around. The ordeal she had feared was no ordeal at all. She was regarding the trim-cut lawn, and the masses of rhododendrons, and the openings through the trees which revealed glimpses of the sea and distant hills; and she was thinking that for a man of letters no more desirable haven of rest could have been found. Was it a wonder that he had

written those charming papers in this dream-like quiet? The world seemed filled with sunlight here; and yet there was a slight, cool breeze coming over from the sea to temper the heat; and as it passed along it stirred some lime-trees down there by the rivulet, and the sweet scent was all around. And the old lady was very pleased to see the place looking so beautiful; and she was pretty sure in her own mind that a contemplative student would be glad enough to have it as a gift, and to remain there for a portion of the year at least, and do the best work of which he was capable in it, and perhaps also submit to be bothered—for a week or two in the summer—by a visit from two idle women escaping into this gracious quiet from the clang of London life.

Occupied by this pleasing fancy, the old lady, accompanied by the two younger people, now set out on an inspection of the place. Father Time received high praise for the condition of the garden. Then they visited the kennel and the stables and the fowl-house and what not; and, as the day

was so beautiful, Mrs. Chetwynd said she thought she could walk as far as the shore, and have a look at the *Black Swan* lying at her moorings.

But to do this they had to return to the house and take a road leading somewhat inland from the marshy stretches lying alongside the creek; and they were leisurely walking along, chatting and watching birds and butterflies and so forth, when Fitzgerald suddenly discovered that right ahead of them, at some distance, stood the Knockgarvan bull, calmly contemplating them, and apparently disposed to contest their right of way. It was an awkward, even a serious, situation. He knew the beast and its ill-temper; and had, indeed, passed it several times, though on these occasions he had been accompanied —as was his wont in going about—with one or other of the dogs, and when there is a dog about the bull does not pay much attention to its master. However, now there was no help for it; there was no gate for the two women to go through, no wall for them to get behind; and he knew very well that the

first symptom of fear or retreat would be the first inducement for the bull to pursue. Moreover, he dared not even tell his companions of their danger; for he was afraid the old lady might scream and try to run away, and there was absolutely no shelter. So he continued talking in a loud and unconcerned way, carefully keeping a short distance ahead of the two ladies.

"Oh yes, Mrs. Chetwynd," he was saying (with an anxious eye on the bull all the time), "that purple loose-strife is a very handsome plant when you see it growing by the way-side—very handsome—yes—splendid colour out-of-doors——"

Here he had come within stone's throw of the bull, which stood immovable but for the angry twisting about of its tail. He picked up a pebble and carlessely shied it at the animal.

"Get out of that!" he growled—with apparent indifference—and forthwith continued his talking.

"—but it is worth nothing in-doors. It does not tell in a room. It loses the pink

and becomes purple. I told Mick to cut a lot and meant to put them in the dining-room when you came; but I found they would not do——"

Here the animal gave a low, warning bellow; but there was nothing for it. He kept on talking; always a little ahead of his companions; and he knew the time was come, for good or ill.

"Mr. Fitzgerald," said Mrs. Chetwynd, anxiously, "hadn't we better go back?——"

"Oh no," said he, carelessly. "Come along. It is only one of the Knockgarvan beasts strayed down from the farm. *Get out of the way, will you?*"

He lifted this time a big stone—what in those districts is called a rock—and pitched it at the brute, intending to miss him. By dire mischance the lump of stone landed on the animal's nose; and Master Willie's heart at the same moment leapt to his mouth, for he was convinced that the beast would not endure such an insult. But slowly and sulkily, and with deep mutterings and twisting of the tail, the coward brute yielded its dignity, and

crossed a ditch and went into the adjoining pasture. Fitzgerald was much too prudent to try a repetition of the stone-heaving. He let well alone.

"I was saying," he continued, as if nothing had happened, "that loose-strife isn't good for lighting up a room. Fox-gloves are better; but even they are too purple. Now a splendid show of wildflowers is to get the marigolds that grow in the corn here; and mix them up with meadow-sweet——"

He cautiously turned his head; the bull—at some distance—was regarding them, but evidently not inclined to follow. In a few more minutes they were down at the little landing-slip; and here was the Ghoul, otherwise Sheil Glanny—a great, awkward-looking man, with bushy black hair and brass-rimmed spectacles—seated on the beach, tarring a broken-down old punt.

"Sheil," said Fitzgerald to him, under his breath, "haul in the boat there; and I'll row the ladies out to the yacht. And then you'll go back to the house, and tell Mick to bring a couple of the dogs along the road, and drive

the Knockgarvan bull up to the farm. And you'll tell him to tell the boy that the next time he lets the beast go wandering down here like that, I'll come up with a stick and beat him till he's black and blue."

"Sure I'll do it mesilf now, sir," said Sheil, looking about for an instrument.

Then it occurred to Fitzgerald that this was a most injudicious threat, seeing how near the shooting season was.

"No," said he; "Mick is to give the boy this shilling; and say I am much obliged to him for keeping his dog from hunting; and, while the ladies are here, would he see that the bull is kept up at the farm?"

"Very well, sir," said Sheil, going away rather down-faced, and no doubt thinking that it was throwing away a shilling when a beating would have done as well or better.

So Fitzgerald got into the big boat and rowed the two ladies (he noticed that Mrs. Chetwynd kept a hand tightly grasping the gunwale all the time, though the water was like glass) out to the *Black Swan* and got them on board. She was a smart enough

looking yacht of about fifty feet in length, with a small cabin aft, and a larger one forward; and as there was a pretty strong odour of new paint about, it was clear that Sheil Glanny had been occupying his spare time usefully. Indeed so anxious did the old lady seem that Fitzgerald should express approval of the little yacht that even her niece refrained from making disrespectful comments; nay, she even undertook to make a cup of tea for them, until she found that all the small lockers were locked and that there was neither tea nor anything else to be got at on board.

"I think she is a beautiful little boat; and very handy and convenient," said Fitzgerald to the old lady's great delight. "I had no idea there was such room in her. Why, half-a-dozen people could sleep on board. And with that twisting channel down at the mouth of the creek, a sailing-yacht would never be able to get in here. To-morrow, then, Mrs. Chetwynd, would you like to take a trip; for I will tell Sheil about getting up steam?"

"If—if you wish it," said Mrs. Chetwynd, rather doubtfully.

"Don't drive auntie into a corner," said the niece, laughing. "She would be trembling all the time. No; she shall come down to the beach; and I will go with you, if you like, for I know the way down the creek; and we will have a short run out and back, and pick up auntie again. How will that do?"

"It will do very well," said the old lady, "if you are not in one of your scornful moods. But when Mr. Fitzgerald knows you a little better, he will know when you are speaking the truth and when you are not."

When they got back to the house again (there was no bull to contest their passage this time) Fitzgerald took out his fishing-rod, and said he was going down to the stream to see if he could get a sea-trout for their dinner; while the two ladies had tea brought them to the little table outside the porch.

"Mary," said Mrs. Chetwynd, after a time—what a beautiful, quiet, golden afternoon it was!—"I wish you would write to Mr. M'Gee, and ask him to come over and

see me. Or we can send up the yacht for him, if that will suit him best."

"Very well, auntie," said the younger lady, dutifully; "but I think you are making a mistake."

"Why?"

"I have seen it brewing all day long. The place looks pretty; Mr. Fitzgerald is pleased with it, and you are proud of it; and you have gone back to your old notion of giving it to him."

"Well?"

"What would he do with it? He has no money to keep it up, as poor Frank had. You couldn't expect him to live here all his life, in any case—a young man like that, with a great career before him. Why, you'd never even have the satisfaction of seeing him to let him say 'Thank you' for your kindness. Besides, I wouldn't trust the conveyancing of a valuable property to Mr. M'Gee."

"Really, Mary," said her aunt, with a little laugh, "you must have been thinking about it as much as I have all day. But

some of your objections meet each other. I don't want Mr. M'Gee to convey the property ; but to come over and make a calculation as to what would be necessary to keep it up, as it stands. When I present a picture I like to present it framed. And then, no doubt, if what people say about these writings is true, no doubt Mr. Fitzgerald would have to live a part of the year in London ; and I am sure you would be as glad to see him as I should be—for the more I see of him I like him the better ; and—and—in a measure I should like him to be to us what—what my poor boy was. Well, that means money. That means an allowance, Mary. Do you think he is not deserving of it ?"

"I wouldn't say that, auntie dear. But all the deserving people don't meet with such a kind friend. I suppose he will continue to write ? You know, auntie—now don't be cross, for I am only talking common sense—I think you were too good to poor Frank ; and many a time I wished he would give up his hunting and come and do some kind of useful thing——"

"Now, Mary, that is enough," said the aunt—but without anger. "We are not all reformers and politicians like you. If my poor boy pleased himself, that is enough for me; that is what I like to think of. But there's always good sense in what you say, Mary. Of course, I should not dream of making Mr. Fitzgerald such an allowance as would make him independent and careless. Oh no. But I think I can trust the lad. I like the look of his eyes. And if he cannot be everything that my boy was to me—well, at my time of life one is glad to be able to do what kindness one can; and I don't see any one else to whom I would rather give Boat of Garry."

The niece was silent for a little while.

"Auntie," said she, at length, "if you are quite resolved upon this, will you allow me to tell him to-morrow?"

"Yes; why not?"

"There are one or two things I should like to say to him—if you don't mind."

"Why not? Who knows all the circumstances of the case better than you? Well,

now, Mary, I am going to my room to lie down for a while; but you may come and knock at my door before dinner."

Master Willie was not fortunate that afternoon, for there was not a breath of wind, and the surface of the pools was like glass; and he was returning to the house rather disheartened—not knowing that the Ghoul had got two splendid flounders, a cod, and a skate in his drift net, and that Mick, who had been sent up the hill, was bringing back a brace of mountain hares and a couple of teal—when he met Miss Chetwynd. She was trying to plait rushes; and not succeeding very well.

"Mr. Fitzgerald," said she, looking up with those clear, blue-gray eyes of hers, "was not that rather an ill-tempered bull we met this afternoon?"

"It does not like strangers."

"And we were in some danger?"

"Well," said he, hesitatingly, "something might have happened."

"I thought so," she said, regarding him. "And yet you would not tell us we were in danger."

"What would have been the use? I should only have frightened your aunt and made more mischief."

"If my aunt had not been there, would you have told me?"—and for a second her frank, shrewd, enquiring eyes met his.

"Yes, I think I would have told you," he said.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BLACK SWAN.

Mary Chetwynd's manner was ordinarily marked by a perfect ease and simplicity; it seemed to suit the sincerity of her eyes; women noticed it and found her companionable; sick children were glad to be nursed by her; poor people did not become self-conscious when she entered their door; at her aunt's table she spoke to guests and servants in precisely the same voice; she had the same smile, the same frank look for every one. All this pertness of humour she had displayed since their arrival at Boat of Garry had been assumed; but it had answered its purpose; the old lady had taken quite naturally to the place; there were no fits of despondency or gloomy reminiscences. But when she herself drew near the true object of their visit, she became more grave; and again

and again found herself wishing that these explanations were well over. At all events, chance provided her with an ample opportunity of making them.

Next morning Mrs. Chetwynd had almost resolved to go on board the *Black Swan*, and even went down to the shore of the creek with them; but at the last moment she changed her mind, and said she would go to the hill above the house, from which she could see them sail away out into Bantry Bay and back. But this hesitation had caused delay; and when at length Miss Chetwynd and Fitzgerald and Mick the keeper got on board the little yacht they found the Ghoul in a state of great excitement and impatience. There was a rapid ebb tide running; steam was up to within five pounds of the extreme registered pressure; the donkey-engine was rattling away as if it were in a tin box; and Sheil Glanny was here, there, and everywhere —at the moorings, at the furnace-door, at the waste-pipe, at the coals. And then, before Fitzgerald fairly knew where he was amid all the uproar, he found himself with a rope in

his hand, and the rope was attached to a hauling and jerking and throbbing iron tiller, and he knew that the *Black Swan* was forging ahead just anywhere, for the condensers had not arrived, and he was enveloped in steam, not even the bow of the boat being visible.

"Miss Chetwynd," he called aloud—for the Ghoul was down in the bunkers again—"have you any notion where we are going?"

"Not the least," said she. "But Micky is at the bow."

However, the steam abated, or else the wind freshened; at all events, he began to get glimpses of his surroundings, and strove as near as he could to keep this raging little beast in mid-channel. And what a noise it made!—or rather a succession of noises, each distinct, and each sharply following the other! And then there was still another—a sudden, brain-dividing shriek, twice repeated; and he saw that Miss Chetwynd had hold of the brass chain of the steam-whistle.

"That is a signal to auntie: do you think she will hear?" she said—or shouted.

"Hear?" he answered. "They will hear

it at New York. I believe you have killed every curlew within six miles of us."

Then, to his unspeakable satisfaction, the great black-headed creature with the big brass-rimmed spectacles, came on deck again, and assumed charge of the tiller, calling Mick along to help at the same moment. It was evident they were approaching the dreaded Narrows. Now and again in the deep clear water some sudden flashes of golden-brown were seen—the long arms of the seaweed. Far ahead there were some strange-looking swirls—silver curlings on the glassy blue; though no rocks were visible. Moreover, as they drew nearer and nearer to this narrow channel it was very apparent that the tide was flowing seaward like a mill-race.

"We should have started an hour before," said Miss Chetwynd, looking rather apprehensively at the swirling water.

"At all events we can't turn and face that tide now," her companion observed.

The Ghoul was paying heed not to them, but to the course of the water and the lie of the shore. Then he shouted—

"Hard over, Mick!"

Fitzgerald lent a hand, too; and the iron tiller was jammed over. Of course he looked to see the yacht swing round. She did nothing of the kind. The current was too much for her steering way.

There was a slight scratch—a sort of grating sensation—only for the briefest possible point of time. Fitzgerald looked at Miss Chetwynd—with a natural sort of enquiry; for she knew more about this performance than he did. He found she was regarding him—and waiting.

They had not long to wait. In fact the whole thing had happened before they had had time to think. Immediately following that grating scratch along the keel there was a distinct and solid bump that shook the yacht from stem to stern; the Ghoul sprang forward to shut off the steam; there was the slightest tilting over of the boat; and then, after all this excitement and noise, the strangest imaginable silence. Everybody stood still, doing nothing. The Ghoul looked away astern, in a reproachful kind of way. Then Fitzgerald

began to wonder whether she was aground on rock, or on shingle, or on mud; and whether she would remain upright. And then various examinations and surmises and suggestions resolved themselves to this—that they were stuck here for five hours at least, with the compensation that the summer day was beautiful and around them a perfect and delicious quiet.

"You know, Miss Chetwynd," Fitzgerald said, at length, "Micky and I might manage to get you ashore in the boat. We should be whirled along a good bit; but that would only give you another quarter of a mile to walk back to the house."

"Would you have me desert the ship?" she said. "What might become of Sheil, if he were left alone? You could never pull the boat back to the yacht against that current. Besides, when the tide rises high enough to float the yacht again, who knows what will happen?"

"But five hours——" said he.

"Mr. Fitzgerald," said she, somewhat diffidently, "I—I have some things to tell

you that—that won't take up five hours perhaps; but that will give you plenty to think over for that time."

"Not too serious?" he said.

"Oh no, not at all. I hope not," she said.

So they had to set to work to make themselves comfortable during this enforced detention. Fortunately, the *Black Swan*, when she ran into the bed of shingle and seaweed, fixed herself without much of a list; and the deck stools were quite serviceable. Sheil Glanny had gone below to bank up his fires and let off some of the steam; and Mick had accompanied him. These two, then, were practically alone in this shining, silent world of sky and sea, with the slow-sailing white clouds mirrored in the blue expanse of water, and the slight hissing all around them of the currents swirling between the rocks.

Mary Chetwynd's manner, as has already been said, was in ordinary circumstances marked by a perfect ease and self-possession; she never seemed to have to think twice about what she was going to say; she always

appeared to be on the most simple and friendly terms both with herself and with everybody around her. Now, however, it was clear that she was embarrassed. She remained silent for a time; her eyes were fixed on the deck; once or twice she opened and shut her sun-shade aimlessly. And when she did speak, she jumbled nearly all the things she had to say together, in a very incoherent way.

"Mr. Fitzgerald—I—I don't think you and I have been quite fair to each other. I—I have been reading those papers in the *Daily Mirror*—I did not know you thought about such things—and then I am afraid you have not been quite happy here—and auntie wants to give you the place—and hopes you will stay here—and I want you to go away."

Her fingers were trembling.

"It is so difficult to make explanations," she said. "But I feel that it was inconsiderate of me to ask you to come here——"

What could make her so timid and almost distressed?—she who ordinarily did not seem to know what nervousness meant.

"I hope you won't think of it," he said, hastily coming to her rescue—and with an embarrassment about equal to her own. "Yesterday you seemed concerned about it also. Please don't think of it for a moment. I assure you it is a very good thing for people to be alone sometimes: it makes them find out something about themselves. Surely it is not a trumpery matter like that that you want to speak about for five hours, Miss Chetwynd? I assure you I have enjoyed the time tremendously since I was here—I don't expect ever to have such a holiday again as long as I live. But who told you I wrote those papers in the *Mirror?*"

"Who told me?" she said, with her face brightening; for now the awkwardness of beginning was over; and here was a solid, practical subject that involved no danger. "They did. Every line—though I don't think you ever wrote quite in that way before. Auntie herself would have led me to suspect; for she thought they were like what our poor Frank might have written, just as she thought about the other papers in the *Household*

Magazine. So there must be some similarity; but yet I see a great difference——"

Here she flushed slightly; and immediately said—

"I wonder, now, if you know here what an impression they have made on the public? I suppose not. Do you know that every one is talking about them—as something quite new in literature? And the weekly papers have been saying the nicest things about them, especially the *Liberal Review*——"

"No—not the *Liberal Review?*" said he, quickly.

"Oh yes, indeed. Again and again. When you go back to London you will find yourself quite famous."

That topic ought not to have been distasteful to a young author; but he merely said—

"I have had some letters about them. And invitations to contribute elsewhere. One publisher, indeed, wants to reprint them. If that were done, and if the public cared to read them in that form, I might be able, after all, to gain some little footing in literature—enough for a beginner. I *had* begun to

despair. I was at it a long time; and of course one does not like to confess one's-self a failure; and I should like to have a definite way of earning a living besides. But don't bother about my affairs, Miss Chetwynd."

"I must," she said, brightly—for she was glad the ice was broken. "I have been entrusted by auntie with the duty of telling you that she is more bent than ever on asking you to take over Boat of Garry——"

"I remember. It is very kind of her, I am sure," he said, "but in my circumstances it would be worse than useless."

"Yes; so she understands," said his companion, calmly. "You mean that you could not afford to keep up the place. Every one must see that. But what auntie says is that when she presents a picture to any one she presents it framed; and, of course, she would see that you had enough to keep up Boat of Garry properly. More than that—and this is where my interest comes in—you would have quite enough to have rooms in London besides, and you might spend as much of the year there as you wished; in fact, you

would have your entire time at your disposal."

He was regarding her with astonishment, almost with incredulity.

"I do believe," she said, with a slight, humorous smile, "that you think I am going to ask you for a subscription to my charities."

"No," said he, "I was wondering why your aunt should be so kind to me. This is overwhelming——"

"Oh, do you wish to know why poor old auntie is kind? You had better leave that to the philosophers. It is a way she has. And in this instance I don't oppose her. I hope auntie will live many years yet; and I don't see the fun of keeping up Boat of Garry for the benefit of Mr. M'Gee. Now, Mr. Fitzgerald, as auntie doesn't talk any longer of asking you to give up your name as a condition, I have no doubt you will become the owner of Boat of Garry, and you will be your own master, and have all your time at your disposal. Very likely auntie may expect you to spend most of the year here. I hope you will not. You will be in a position to be

of very great use in the world. Of what use would you be here? It would be all very well to use Boat of Garry as a place of recuperation—after work done; but it would be selfish—at least, so it seems to me—if you were merely to settle down here to enjoy yourself, even in the most innocent way, with those delightful rambles that you describe. Mr. Fitzgerald," she said, after a second, "I don't think you have been fair to me. You have met me among some scientific people; and you think I care for nothing but science. You think I am heartless. Well, let that be as it may; it is of no consequence; but at all events I think this—that those who are well off, and in a position where they enjoy the comforts of life in peace and security, should remember how these things were made possible to them—simply through the best people, century after century, doing their best—and they ought to have some gratitude, and be willing to lend a hand at the same work, for the benefit of those who are in less favoured circumstances. I don't like to talk about what some of us are trying

to do among the poor in the East-end of London; for it isn't very picturesque; and it does not appeal much to sentiment; and then it is so easy to impute motives. Well, I don't care much what the motive is, if the result is the same. Very likely, doing charitable actions is only another form of self-gratification; and I suppose I consider myself a superior person; but let us take the case of a sick woman who can't stir from her bed to look after the poor room and kitchen, and she is afraid her husband, when he comes home at seven, will be discontented, and go away to the public-house, and suppose you take one of your district nurses to the place and say to her 'Well, never mind about the physic; she can help herself to that if the bottle is marked; but you look round in the evening, between six and seven, and give the place a bit smartening up, and have hot water for the husband's tea, against his coming home, and stir the fire, and have one or two illustrated papers about'—well, perhaps, to see the look of gratitude on the sick woman's face is only to flatter your self-love; I don't

say it is not; but ask the poor woman what is her opinion—whether she would have that done for her, or have the house left to its discomfort and squalor, and her husband turn out and leave her alone."

"I don't think," said he, slowly, "that I should be quick to impute motives, if you would tell me what it is you are doing there."

"Oh, but when I find a sympathetic listener," she said, with a laugh, "I am dreadful. I know so many stories, that are interesting to me, because I know the people; but they cannot be so interesting to others——"

"You see, Miss Chetwynd," he continued, "short of a miraculous rising of the tide, we are stuck fast here for four hours and a half——"

"And you would have four hours and a half description of our lectures and entertainments, our Sunday services, and district nurses, and open-air spaces, and our window flower-boxes, and all that? Oh no. Some other day, perhaps. At this moment, Mr. Fitzgerald, it has occurred to me that you might ask whether there is anything that

might serve for lunch on board this ship-wrecked boat."

"I believe there is a tin of biscuits," said he.

"That will do excellently."

"Shall I bring them now?"

"If you please."

Accordingly he went down into the little cabin, and handed up, not only the biscuits, but also two bottles of soda-water and two clean tumblers; so that they had a most wholesome, if somewhat simple, banquet on deck, on this fair warm summer day. And insensibly she began to tell him something of her own troubles; for it appeared that those charitable people were not all of one mind; and, besides certain schemes and organisations of her own planning, it turned out that she belonged to one or two societies of kindred intent.

"And I do so want somebody to back me up," she said. "You must know I am a dreadful heretic and innovator. Mr. Fitz-gerald—I am the champion of beer."

"Oh indeed," said he.

"You know, it is easy enough to get on with the boys' entertainments; all they want as a bribe is a biscuit or two, with some apples, or nuts if it is not apple time. And then we are doing good service to the country by reading them patriotic poetry or stories of bravery at sea; and showing them a bit of practical science by means of a magic lantern; or even hinting that a boy should be too proud to steal, and not refrain simply from fear of the police-station. But the men: what I say is, how can you expect the Stepney workman, or the costermonger from Shadwell, or the tired labourer from the docks to come and sit out a lecture on ventilation or some such thing, with nothing to make him comfortable but a cup of tea, which gets cold directly, and with his pipe in his pocket? I say it is asking too much. I say it is not common sense. What harm is there in letting each man have his pint of light ale—I am afraid they would not take to the Bavarian beer, though that would be the safest—and his pipe? I did not like it at first; but now I can stand a hall-full of men smoking pipes.

One must not be too particular. I was amused not long ago at the bravery of Lady ——, who came down to see how we were getting along. She came to a boys' entertainment, in a very low neighbourhood —to tell you the truth, Mr. Fitzgerald, I suspect about one-third of them were thieves ; but all the same she stood at the door as they went out and shook hands with each of them and complimented them on their good behaviour. And the next night I had got them together, I thought I would tell them that Lady —— was a great friend of the Queen's ; and one small chap said immediately 'Please, Miss, did the lady ever shake hands with the Queen?' You can see what the poor little fellow meant, that he had shaken hands with some one who had shaken hands with the Queen. But there again, that shows the imprudence of allowing strangers to come among us out of mere curiosity, for they would call that snobbishness——"

"What does it matter what they call it?" said Fitzgerald, with some warmth.

"I thought it was very pretty of Lady —— to shake hands with each of the boys; and I take no shame to myself that I told them she was a friend of the Queen's. It is very easy to criticise when you don't have to face the actual circumstances. I know it took me some time before I could bear the tobacco-smoke. I tried a mean way of getting out of it by presenting them with good tobacco; but that was no use; they would not smoke mine; I suppose it was too delicate. Oh, did you hear what Mr. Scobell did just before we left London?"

"No, I think not."

"He sent me another three hundred filters!—just think of it. So there will have to be another big lecture and a distribution as soon as we get back."

Apparently this young lady with the clear eyes and the bright smile had found a sufficiently sympathetic listener, for the time passed quite unobserved as she described all this work that was going on. They did not even notice that the tide was now flowing in; that one or two shallow banks, where the

heavy sea-tangle had lain exposed in the sun, were now covered by the sea again ; and that the Ghoul was watchful and anxious.

All at once the *Black Swan* was found to be moving ; but it was only a list from one side to the other ; that was so sharp, however, that it very nearly threw everybody into the water. And then as the tide rose she gradually righted ; Sheil Glanny, finding she was deep enough astern, ventured upon backing her off ; there was just enough room to turn ; and the next minute the *Black Swan* was sailing right up the creek again, while a shrill scream or two from the steam-whistle would tell the Boat of Garry people of her return. And then the throbbing and puffing and churning came to a sudden end ; in renewed quiet the little yacht cut its way through the glassy water ; with the boat-hook Mick dexterously made a grab at the moorings ; and presently the two voyagers were on their way to the shore.

"There now, Mr. Fitzgerald," she said, as they walked along the road together to the house, "have I been the whole day talking

to you about heaps of things that you cannot take any interest in; and all that I meant to say to you I have forgotten. Except this—please don't stay at Boat of Garry when it becomes yours—at least not always. I am very, very sorry I asked you to come here—I would not have done so if I had thought you were going to write about it like that—I am very, very sorry——"

She was speaking in rather a low voice, with her eyes downcast.

"But why?" said he, good-naturedly. "Any place is solitary when one is alone; and this place is most beautiful—that is all the difference. But do you really think," he added, more thoughtfully, "that these papers have made an impression on the public?"

"Most certainly," said she, with her face brightening. "Who could doubt it? Or is there any wonder that people should be grateful for having it pointed out that the common things of the world are far more beautiful than they had fancied? Does it not make life a little richer?"

"But I had nothing to do with that," said

he, absently, "I was only repeating John Ross—my artist friend, you remember, Miss Chetwynd: I was only pointing out what he had shown me. No, why I asked was with the fancy that perhaps now I could earn something in literature. Perhaps there might be a prospect for me now; indeed, I think so myself, from one or two offers that I have received. Pray forgive me, Miss Chetwynd," he added, suddenly recollecting himself, "for talking about my affairs to you; but indeed I might say that you yourself are concerned——"

"I?" she said, with something like a start.

"In a measure," he continued. "I should like to go back to London soon I think——"

"Oh, I am glad of that!" she exclaimed, with very obvious eagerness.

"And if matters go well," he said, "you know you hinted about a contribution to all these varied charities of yours—I say, if matters go well, you will perhaps allow me to give you a contribution."

She laughed lightly. She did not think it

was probable he was so soon to become rich.

"What will your contribution be?" she said, idly, as he opened the big iron gate for her.

"Well," said he, "if your aunt would consent——"

"My aunt. What has she to do with it?"

"Oh, a great deal," he continued, as they walked along the gravel path up to the house. "I was thinking, if she had no great objection, my contribution ought to be——"

"Not two hundred pounds a year?" she suggested, rather jokingly.

"No," he answered, looking round at the beautiful place. "I was thinking that my contribution ought to be—Boat of Garry."

CHAPTER VII.

PLANS AND DREAMS.

"Now, auntie dear," said Mary Chetwynd, as she put her hat on the hall-table, and smoothed her hair, and went into the room, "I know you are going to scold me."

"Indeed I am," said the old lady, with some astonishment and indignation. "Where have you been? To Limerick? To Queenstown? Scold you, indeed!—no wonder!——"

"Oh, but I don't mean about that," her niece said. "That was unavoidable. We have been close by all the time—stuck fast. I daresay you were afraid of the bull and came straight home; but if you had only climbed up the hill high enough, you might have had the pleasure of contemplating us for the last five hours. Only another little adventure: one gets used to them on board the *Black Swan*."

"How provoking now!" Mrs. Chetwynd exclaimed. "The very first time that Mr. Fitzgerald goes to try the yacht! Of course he will think she is always getting into trouble——"

"Isn't she, auntie dear?"

"What was Sheil Glanny about?" said the old lady, angrily.

"Now, auntie, you need not quarrel with Sheil Glanny. The real cause of the accident was yourself. You kept pretending you wished to go, just to assure Mr. Fitzgerald that nothing could be more delightful than a trip in the *Coalscuttle;* and so we were late in starting; and at the Narrows the current came after Sheil Glanny as if it wanted to swallow him; and then we found ourselves quietly shelved. Now, auntie, tell me; as I have been talking to Mr. Fitzgerald for these five mortal hours, haven't I done my best to make up for the silence he must have endured here? And what will he think about women's tongues after that?"

"I have not the least doubt," said the old lady, peevishly, "that you were all the time

trying to make him discontented with Boat of Garry."

"No, not quite so bad as that," said the young lady. She was seated with her back to the window, and the afternoon sun touched the outline of the prettily-shaped head, leaving the face in shadow. "But still bad enough to merit a scolding. I am quite prepared for it. For indeed, auntie, Mr. Fitzgerald seemed quite surprised when I told him what a stir these writings of his had made; and naturally he wishes to get back to London, which is the proper place for a literary man; and no doubt he is ambitious——"

"Yes, and no doubt," said her aunt, "you encouraged him in thinking of leaving Boat of Garry, the very place where he found just such things as he could write about, and you urged him to go to London, where he will have no speciality at all——"

"Auntie," said Mary Chetwynd, "a man who can write like that can write about anything; it is not a question of place or opportunity. Why, you know," she continued,

"that all that description of the sea, or of the night-time, or salmon-fishing, or any occupation of the moment, is only an excuse? Surely you can feel that there is something that is behind all that—something that gets hold of people though they can scarcely tell how. I will undertake to say he could make a description of daybreak in Whitechapel as mysterious and wonderful and interesting as a description of daybreak at Killarney. Do you think he is going to lose his eyes because he goes to London?"

Miss Chetwynd glanced outside to make sure there was no one there.

"What the secret of it is I don't know," she said, "only he seems to give you the sensation that all the inanimate things in the world are alive, and watching you, and patiently sympathetic. Don't you remember, auntie, Mrs. Sims's solemn vow that never again would she put on her table flowers that had been forced white in cellars? I told that to Mr. Fitzgerald to-day; and he laughed and said it was nonsense; but I thought it was a very pretty compliment. I want to

show him what we are doing in the East-end; I think he would understand quick enough, and not misjudge us. Mind, I will confess this: for a long time I thought he was merely a sentimental sort of person like——"

"Like me: go on," said the old lady, with a gracious smile.

"No, not like you at all; but like the people who are delighted to read pathetic stories of the poor, and who admire kindness in the abstract, but who would not forfeit their own dinner to keep a whole household from starvation, and who would shudder with horror if they were asked to put a sponge to a child's dirty face. Well, we all make mistakes, I suppose. Those papers showed me I was mistaken about him, anyway. There is something deeper than sentiment in his nature. And—and—" continued the young lady, with a certain embarrassment, for she seemed to become conscious that she had been talking very frankly, "—and I am glad he is going away from here—if only for a time; for I was uneasy about my share in his coming; and if he were once away, don't

you see, dear auntie, he could decide about coming back or not just as he pleased, and that would be his own doing. Now I am ready to be scolded."

"For what, then?"

"Oh, perhaps I have not come to the worst," said the penitent. "You know, you said I might tell him of your kind intentions, auntie; and he was very grateful—no wonder; and even astonished, for he asked why you should be so kind, whereupon I referred him to the philosophers who can explain why the sky is blue. But did I tell you how interested he seemed when I told him all that is going on down there in the East-end? Did I? Very well; when he began to talk about his literary prospects, and of the chance of his gaining an independent position that way, what do you think he proposed?—to give me a contribution!"

"After five hours' talking, what less could he do? I think you deserved it."

"But his contribution, auntie dear,—always with your consent, mind—he said he should like to be Boat of Garry."

"I don't understand you."

"He meant that—that, if you didn't mind, auntie—he would give us Boat of Garry, or what it might fetch rather——"

"He shall not; he shall not," said the old lady, with decision. "You may play ducks and drakes with your own money, Mary; but no one shall go and throw away my poor Frank's place on Shadwell or Stepney. I won't hear of it——"

"But if you say not, then not it must be," remarked the young lady, good-naturedly. "Of course he could not do such a thing without your consent——"

"I shall not allow it. Why, the idea! Is that all he cares for the place?"

But here Miss Chetwynd grew alarmed. She knew not what mischief she might not have done.

"Auntie dear," she said, with some eagerness, "there is no use to say another word about it. It was only a suggestion. I think he deserves credit for entertaining such a generous fancy, if only for a moment. Would you find many young men—fond of riding,

and shooting, and all that—willing to part with such a place? And the idea that he does not appreciate it; or recognise its beauties! But I am sure, auntie dear, you would not be the one to stand in the way of a young man making a great reputation for himself? And that is why I think he ought to go away—at least for a time—and establish himself in London. Give him Boat of Garry, by all means, auntie; and the frame of the picture, too; but you would not make the conditions too rigorous; you could not expect him to remain here always; no doubt he would be glad enough to come here from time to time—the winter shooting, he says, is excellent——"

"Mary Chetwynd," said her aunt, with a severity that was in great part assumed, "you are trying to throw me off the scent. I can see what you are after. You wish me to put Mr. Fitzgerald in the position of having independent means, with no occupation——"

"I? Was it you or I who proposed that?" said the young lady, with some warmth.

"Wait a moment, I see your scheme. You don't impose upon me, miss. Here you have a young man who is quick, intelligent, of a generous disposition; and, of course, when he has a fair allowance of money, and absolutely nothing to do, isn't he the very person—even supposing that he is not allowed to sell Boat of Garry—to be carried off and added to your Whitechapel gang? Oh, I see the whole thing clearly enough; though my eyes are not as good as they once were. Here you have a clever young man for your lectures; and Whitechapel swallows him up; no one ever sees him again; literature loses him; and Boat of Garry is left empty and useless. So that is why we go and run a valuable steam-yacht on to a rock; and that is why we talk for five hours; and no doubt Whitechapel looks rather a pretty sort of place—in a distant way—when you have a smooth blue sea and picturesque mountains round you?"

The young lady flushed slightly; but she retained her accustomed good humour.

"You are quite mistaken, auntie," said she;

but now she spoke in a lower tone, for Fitzgerald was standing on the lawn outside, putting the pieces of his rod together. "Mr. Fitzgerald has his own plans. He is not likely to be led by either you or me. If either, it would be you, naturally; for he is greatly indebted to you; whereas he and I are practically strangers. And I know he is anxious to acquire a position in literature; and I should not wonder if, when this book of his comes to be published, it were to make him quite famous. No, auntie," she continued, in a lighter way, for Fitzgerald had started off, "I know what will happen. Your kindness will enable Mr. Fitzgerald to write just in the way that suits his own bent; he will be under no anxiety except to do his best work; and, of course, he will be grateful to you; and you will be able to produce him at your dinner-table as your own author. Think of that! You will have him all to yourself; you alone will know what he is working at; a real, live, distinguished author constantly on the premises. For no doubt you will ask him to come and live in Hyde Park Gardens; and

then you can get a study for him by turning me and my nine-inch telescope out-of-doors. Then his lordship, when he pleases, will come over here to shoot wild-duck; and perhaps, auntie dear, you won't mind sending me a brace now and again to my lodgings in the Mile End Road, where I shall most likely be starving, after having sold my telescope and my last pair of boots."

"Go away and tell them to bring tea," said her aunt, sharply; and so this discussion came to an end.

Meanwhile the object of all this diverse speculation was making his way down through the meadows to the stream, his long rod swaying over his shoulder. There was a contented look on his face on this warm and pleasant afternoon. The neighbourhood of Boat of Garry seemed much more cheerful since the arrival of these visitors. And yet he was not paying much attention to the things around him; rather he was amusing himself by drawing an imaginary picture of what his life would have been had he been content to accept Mrs.

Chetwynd's munificent offer in its simplicity. He was thinking of himself as owner of Boat of Garry: living a quiet, solitary resigned life; taking what care of the place he could, no matter into whose hands it was destined ultimately to fall; perhaps, through industrious stewardship, being able to save something to send to Miss Chetwynd's charities; and then from time to time, in this peaceful and uneventful existence, jotting down the impressions of these silent hours, and so maintaining a sort of relationship with the unknown friends over there in England whom he should never see. He looked ahead, and beheld himself as another person. A sensation of being middle-aged came over him. It was in that character, indeed, that he had written the "Occupations of a Recluse." There was a tone in them as of the thinking of one for whom the eager interests of life were over. He had arrived at the stage of contemplation; the phenomena of the earth around him were not of much importance, except in so far as they suggested strange fancies, or became the

secret friends and confidants of his solitary walks by sea and shore.

He was amusing himself with this fancy of what his life might be. There was the possibility offered him. There was no need for him to hand over Boat of Garry to Miss Chetwynd's charities; more than that, it was extremely doubtful whether Mrs. Chetwynd would allow him. Indeed, so busy was he with this dream of the future that when he sat down on a low boundary-wall, and placed his rod beside him against the stones, and took out his fly-book, he kept mechanically turning over the leaves and straightening here and there a bit of feather or fur, and did not hear the footsteps behind him.

It was the boy that helped Murtough in the stables; and he brought two letters. He glanced at the basket; but did not venture to ask his honour whether he had caught anything; then he reluctantly left.

These two letters made Fitzgerald's heart beat, and caused his imagination to be fired with far other dreams than that of spending an idle contemplative life out of the world.

The first was from the publisher who had already proposed to issue the "Occupations" in a volume; and who now put his offer in definite terms: a considerable sum—a sum that Fitzgerald had not dreamed of—to be paid down; with a royalty on each copy after a certain number had been sold. If Mr. Fitzgerald agreed, would he proceed with the revision of the papers forthwith? And did he happen to know of some capable artist who, in his opinion, would be a fit person to illustrate the book?

"I think John Ross and I will have a little talk about this," he said to himself.

But it was the second letter that he read and re-read with far greater gratification. That was about money; this was a personal triumph. It ran as follows:—

"Sloane Street, Wednesday.

"My dear Sir—You may remember that I had the pleasure of meeting you one evening at Mr. Hilton Clarke's, when Mr. Scobell, who has obligingly given me your address, was also present. I had heard a

rumour to the effect that the papers "The Occupations of a Recluse" were by a Mr. Fitzgerald; but I did not identify the name with yourself until I accidentally met Mr. Scobell, who put me right. It has since occurred to me that you might find greater freedom as to choice of subject in the columns of a weekly paper; although I must confess that Noel appears to have given you a very wide discretion. His boldness has been justified; the papers are well spoken of; they are unusual; they have the touch of a new hand. Of course I do not say Leave the *Mirror* and come to the *Liberal Review;* I do not consider that fair journalism; but many of the writers on the daily papers also contribute to the weeklies; and I merely say that if you happen to have an occasional article (you might find yourself, for example, with a subject which would be somewhat too subtle and out-of-the-way for the hurry of daily newspaper reading) that you chose to send to us, I should be glad to have it; and as we have two rates of payment for different kinds of matter, I

should be happy to put you on the most favoured nation scale.

"Yours faithfully,

"G. GIFFORD."

"To William Fitzgerald, Esq.,
"Boat of Garry, by Bantry, Ireland."

His first, quick, proud thought was that he would walk straight to the house and show this letter to Mary Chetwynd.

But why to her? She did not know the story. There was no one now who knew the story; and his triumph was useless.

He regarded these letters. There could be no doubt that they shadowed forth prospects that ought to have been alluring enough to a young man of literary tendencies and aspirations. Indeed, as he looked at them, and guessed at all they hinted at, that career seemed to him a more noble and useful one than hiding himself away from the world in this solitary place and avoiding the cares and anxieties and victories of life altogether. And so he was to become an

author at last—perhaps even one who might win in some small measure the affection of the great many-eyed, many-hearted, and not ungrateful public? And to write for the *Liberal Review*—that seemed almost as great a wonder: not standing, as of old, at the foot of the little stair, and anxiously awaiting the fate of a timid essay about some one else's work; but allowed to mount into his own small pulpit, as it were, and deliver forth his own utterances, if haply one here or there cared to listen to a whisper from the hills or a murmur from the wide seas amid the jangle of political life. It seemed a wonderful thing. He could scarcely rest. He wanted to be away and begin at once. The great world was calling him from these still solitudes; the picture was opening out before him; to what possible goal might he not attain?

And then somehow—as a sudden sob breaks the silence of the night, and the hushed and hidden grief reveals itself, and all the darkness is shuddering with the old and ceaseless pain—just as quickly and

terribly flashed across his consciousness the words "Too late—too late!" The time for these brave dreams was over now. A man does not strive but towards an end; does not fight without hope of reward; does not strike for a great future if it is for himself alone. "Too late—too late." And he had pretty well schooled himself by this time; and knew when it was time to give up thinking; and was as well aware as any one of the stupidity of idle regret. So he deliberately and calmly put in his pocket the letters; and chose, with patient care, the flies he wanted; and went down among the tall weeds by the side of the river. It was a pleasant afternoon; the water was in good condition; he must not return to the house without a sea-trout for dinner.

For a long time he had exceeding bad luck. The stream abounded with small river-trout, that would keep playing with the big sea-trout flies, occasionally suffering for their folly by finding themselves twitched into the air and then floundering on the grass. This necessitated his fixing the rod

upright and going and getting the diminutive beast off the hook, while there was every probability that in flopping about it had caught one of the other flies in the weeds. And then again he had to be careful about restoring the captive to its native element, for the flash and shoot of it might alarm some more noble fish. But he worked away, whipping industriously and mechanically, not thinking of anything in particular except as to how to get the flies lightly on the water, himself unseen, and how to recover them without catching up on the bank.

At last there was a sudden "flop!" that well he knew the sound of; but he struck too quickly or too sharply. Again and again he dexterously dropped the flies over the same bit of water; but there was no response; perhaps the fish had been touched and had learnt caution. He was beginning to think that he must return to the house empty-handed, when, lower down, there was another "flop!" instantly followed by a sharp whirr of the reel; then again by a deliberate "sulk," during which time he

rapidly got in his line again, keeping on all the strain he dared. He was now in an excellent position, for the fish had taken refuge in a narrow deep little pool beyond some gravelly shallows, and as it was at a bend in the river, he, standing on the neck of land, could have fair command of the fish whichever way he went. However, he now knew pretty well how many and how various were the accidents possible on this little stream, where there was no chance for that fine, leisurely playing of the fish that can be indulged in on an open loch with impunity; and so he kept on the full strain of his tackle, ready for whatever might happen.

He had very little trouble, however. The fish made one long rush up stream; but fortunately kept almost in mid-channel. Then it leaped out of the water twice; but without doing damage. Then it sulked again; but it was evidently growing weaker. Finally, after one or two slow, quiet sailings up and down, it allowed itself to be gently guided into the side, where a cautious and then quick swoop of the landing-net speedily deposited

it on the grass—a beauty of a sea-trout of apparently about three pounds weight.

Well, he thought that was quite enough, seeing it was getting near dinner-time; and Mrs. Chetwynd could not bear unpunctuality; while, of course, he had to exchange his jacket and knickerbockers for a more suitable costume. So he popped the fish in the basket; and was striding home through the meadows that led up to the house, when he saw Miss Chetwynd coming to him through the trees. She had evidently been expecting him.

"Have you caught anything?" she said, pleasantly.

"A fairish sea-trout," he said, "about three pounds. I am afraid it won't be in time for dinner."

"It won't," she said. "It is near dinner-time now. Mr. Fitzgerald," she added, "I wanted to say a word to you, before going in. You hinted something about handing over Boat of Garry to me, to help these various things of mine. It was kind of you. But please don't even mention such a project

to auntie. She will not hear of it; when I spoke of it she was very nearly being angry in earnest; and that does not often happen. No; you must take Boat of Garry, and keep to her wishes; you will find them considerate and reasonable enough."

"But what kind of use could I put it to?" said he, rather bewildered at the moment.

They had reached the corner of the avenue, and the house was visible. She regarded him for a second.

"That is hardly for me to say," she said, slowly. "But I think if you were to take Boat of Garry, as my aunt wishes to give it to you, you would be in a position in which you could do a great deal of good to many, many people."

He could not stay to ask her to explain, even if she were willing to explain; for he had but little time in which to get ready for dinner. During that brief operation, however, some odd fancies occurred to him. If certain things were now no longer possible to him in the world, might not others be? Was it so necessary to human happiness

that life should be crowned by either love or ambition? Look at Mary Chetwynd, now. Her life seemed valuable enough to her, because she could make it valuable to others; it was a beautiful life in its sweet serenity, its cheerfulness, its atmosphere of frankness and kindness and content. Her philosophy was perhaps not very profound; but at least it was practical: "We enjoy such things as we have through the best people having done their best; let us try and do the same; and make the lives of those who have been borne down in the struggle a little more tolerable." It was impossible to imagine a happier human being than she seemed to be; fitting accurately and easily into her surroundings; full of cares that were scarcely anxieties; satisfied with her place in the world; a dispenser of light. It seemed strange for this King's daughter to spend the best part of her life in Whitechapel; but perhaps she could not be just quite what she was if she did otherwise? At all events, she had found out something. That perfect serenity of

content could not be the fruit merely of nature and disposition; it must be the outcome of nature and disposition finding fitting work and occupation. And if a woman's instinct had found out a way of living which seemed to make the world around her (in the eyes of all beholders) more sweet and cheerful and wholesome, might it not be worth while enquiring what that was?

Now, no sooner had they sat down to dinner than the old lady, with a trifle of enforced gaiety to hide a certain nervousness, began to unfold to him her designs.

"Mary and I have been having a dreadful quarrel about you," she said.

"I am sorry for that," was his answer. "But it does not appear as if much harm had been done."

"You must know that Mary and I have been sketching out a career for you—only with a difference—and drawing out plans. Of course the time is very appropriate; for one might almost regard you as making a new start in life——"

"I?" said he, in great alarm. Had she

guessed then of that mortal crisis through which he had come, when the value seemed to go out of life altogether, and death to take its place as the more desirable thing?

"Yes; with all the people talking about the new writer. Of course you will be quite a different person when you return to London. Do you think, when you become great and famous, that we shall expect you to come and read accounts of murders to a poor old blind woman?"

"Indeed I am not likely to become great and famous," he said, honestly enough. "But I should like to earn my living by literature. And I think I might be able to do that; I have just had two letters that give me good hope. But do you think that is any reason why I should prove myself ungrateful for all your kindness? I may be able to earn my living at literature, as I say; and then I would not ask you for the salary you have been kind enough to give me—you might hand it over to Miss Chetwynd for her charities; but that need not prevent my coming to read to you each afternoon,

just as before, if you will allow me. For I know," he added, more lightly, "precisely what you like in the way of literature and news; and I would not hand you over to your niece again, who would make you believe that the magazines and newspapers contained nothing but reports of Sanitary Commissions and things like that——"

"Now I call that too bad," said Mary Chetwynd. "I read to auntie for years, and never got 'Thank you;' you read for a few months, and she gives you Boat of Garry! And then to have insult heaped upon me as well——"

"But, Mr. Fitzgerald," interrupted Mrs. Chetwynd, with some little agitation, "you speak of handing over something to Mary's charities. And Mary said you had made some suggestion. Now you must understand this—do not think I am unreasonable—but you must really understand that any proposal of that kind with regard to Boat of Garry is out of the question. I will give you the place. I will give you enough to keep it up; and a surplus for your own

expenses. But either let or sold or mortgaged Boat of Garry shall not be."

"But, auntie dear," said Mary Chetwynd, in her soft persuasive voice, "Mr. Fitzgerald understands that. I told him. It was only a chance suggestion of his — generous, but impracticable. You need not worry yourself about it, more especially as you can easily put it out of the power of any one to sell the place. Only I would not have you make any one a present with any doubt remaining in your mind. Mr. Fitzgerald won't sell Boat of Garry."

"If it were handed over to me like that," said he, simply enough, "surely I could not do less than consider I held it on trust? It should be done with entirely and merely as you wished."

"I would rather make it binding on your honour than leave it to the lawyers," said she, in a calmer way. "And what I should like would be to have the place kept exactly as it is; and to be well looked after; so that, if you should at any time think of asking us to come and look at it, it would be really

coming to the old place again, and seeing it just as it was when—when my poor boy was so proud of it. For why should you not be proud of it too? It is a pretty place——"

"Mrs. Chetwynd," said he, "you speak as if something were needed to make your splendid offer acceptable to me. I don't think you can understand what it is to a young fellow of my age to be made independent—for that is what it would come to; to have his place in the world made sure for him; and that place a most attractive one. I have been near starvation once or twice—and not so long ago. And now you offer me an assured income; and all kinds of luxuries; and yet you imagine that I don't quite appreciate your kindness, or might be so ungrateful as to do with the property something not according to your wishes. I don't think you need have much fear."

"I will trust to your honour, and not to the lawyers," she said. "I will make no conditions when the transference is drawn out. I won't ask you to take our name, as I had thought of doing; it will be enough if

you do what I want with the place. And if the money is not enough, there will be more. But about the name; I will ask you to let me call you Willie, when you come to see us in London—if you do not mind."

"Oh no—it is only another part of your kindness."

"It is a bargain, then?"

"If you wish it to be, Mrs. Chetwynd," he was saying, rather doubtfully, for he was wondering whether she would always approve of what she had done, and perhaps was thinking of asking her to take time to reflect. But he caught the look of Mary Chetwynd's face. There was a touch of surprise there—almost of reproach. She seemed to say, "Why do you hesitate? Is that the way to accept such a gift?" So he only said: "If I only knew how to thank you?"

"Never mind that," said the old lady, good-naturedly. "It is a bargain, then? Shake hands on it!"

So he rose and went round, and they shook hands to seal the covenant, as it were; and then he kissed her hand in mute token of

gratitude, and went back to his seat. The ceremony was a brief one; but after that she never expressed any anxiety as to what might become of Boat of Garry.

"And now about yourself——" She hesitated for a second, and flushed a little. Evidently she had tried to call him "Willie," and had failed. "Tell me what your plans are. Mary says you would like to go back to London."

"I was thinking I should like to get back for a short time; but it is of little consequence; I will remain here if you prefer it."

"Oh, but that won't do at all. I did not buy you into slavery like that. The landlord of Boat of Garry must do as he pleases. You shall go back to London to-morrow if you wish."

"I could not do that either," said he, with a smile. "For I was thinking, if you did not object, I would ask my artist friend, John Ross, to come over here and make some sketches. They talk of putting illustrations into the volume they are going to publish for me; and if Mr. Ross were to come to Boat

of Garry—I mean, if you didn't mind it—I could show him where to make his sketches, and I suppose they could transform them into woodcuts."

"Bless the boy," the old lady said, with her pretty laugh. "Is he asking for permission to invite a man to come to his own house?"

"He is rather a wild sort of colt, and not easily led," Fitzgerald said, doubtfully.

"For my part," said Mary Chetwynd, who had not spoken for some time, "whoever goes back, I must, very soon."

"Mary, there is not a soul in London!" her aunt exclaimed.

"Is there not, auntie? I can assure you that my friends about the Mile End Road don't go to Biarritz or Mentone—not as a rule."

"Why, now, I wanted Mr. Fitzgerald to go back with us—after a little while—just to have everything put straight——"

"Oh, I don't mind waiting here for a little while yet," Mary Chetwynd said, at once. "I think I have earned a little longer holiday;

and as for you, auntie, as you are a good-for-nothing, it does not matter where you are."

"And I thought we might make the homeward journey in part a driving excursion—going round by way of Killarney. Wouldn't that be charming?"

"Killarney?" said Fitzgerald, with a quick catching of the breath. And he could only add: "Oh, do you think so?"

"Don't you?" she said, regarding him with astonishment. "Have you, an Irishman, anything to say against Killarney?"

"Oh no," he said, rather under his breath. And then he stammered "—No doubt Killarney is very pretty—oh yes, pretty enough. But—but it is scarcely anything more, is it? Perhaps I am not just to it. But I don't care about fresh-water lakes—the mysterious association of the sea is so wonderful a thing. —Do—do you really think it would be worth while taking all the time to drive round by Killarney?"

"Then what do you say to Inisheen?"

She did not notice that the blood forsook

his face for a second. But Mary Chetwynd noticed it, and said quickly—

"Auntie, I declare to you I am not going to waste my time in driving-excursions. These are for idle people. And Dan and Wellington always get fidgety when they are put up in strange stables; do you mean to have our necks broken?"

"My dear, I wanted Mr. Fitzgerald to show us some of the wonderful places he has described——"

"But you can see them all around here," said her niece. "There is far more of Boat of Garry than of Inisheen—if it is Inisheen—in the papers. And what we ought to do is to give all the time we can spare to Mr. Ross, so that we shall have Boat of Garry glorified, and made as famous as the book is sure to be. So I, for one, vote against both Killarney and Inisheen; those on the other side may hold their right hands—their right hand—up."

"Well, you always have your own way, Mary," her aunt said, contentedly.

"And, indeed, auntie, you have not yet

asked Mr. Fitzgerald whether he would prefer to go with us or rather choose his own time? It isn't every one who cares to go travelling with women. Now what I consider would be the reasonable and sensible plan would be this——"

"Whatever agrees with your own wishes, Mary, is always the reasonable and sensible plan," said her aunt, with a smile.

"Well, but listen. The opposition can hold up its right hand when the proper time comes. Mr. Fitzgerald ought to go back to London shortly to arrange about his literary affairs there. I must go back; for there are too many of us away at this time of year. Now we will assume that Mr. Fitzgerald will either be, or pretend to be, content to be burdened with us two women—and take our tickets and all the rest of it—and get grumbled at if we lose anything—and so, what I say is, let us have a little longer holiday here, not bothering about any Killarney or Inisheen; then let us all go back to London; then let Mr. Fitzgerald, when his affairs there are put in proper train, come back here, along

with Mr. Ross, for the shooting. What a pity it would be to miss the shooting——"

"Well, you are right there, Mary," said the old lady, eagerly; for was she not anxious that Fitzgerald should appreciate all the advantages of the place she had given him?

"And of what use are women in a house at such a time? After a hard day on the hill, the men always go to sleep after dinner. Then, according to my plan, there would be no hurry; and Mr. Ross could do his sketches at his own leisure, and do justice to the scenery; and we should all be very pleased to have such a nice souvenir of the place. For who knows what turn affairs may take; and who knows whether Mr. Fitzgerald may be inclined to ask us ever again to visit Boat of Garry? I was going to suggest that he might invite us for Christmas; but Christmas is too busy a time with me."

"I was going to say, Mrs. Chetwynd," said Fitzgerald, who had been sitting with his eyes fixed on the table—and he spoke

rather slowly and with a trifle of embarrassment—"that if you would prefer driving round by Killarney, I should be most happy to go that way with you; and to Inisheen also, if you wished it."

"Oh, I wash my hands of the whole affair," the cheerful old lady said. "I have nothing to do with it. She arranges everything. Settle it between you. I am nothing but a doll in her hands."

"But then you are such a pretty doll, auntie, dear," her niece said, "and such a gentle and well-behaved doll, I have never the least trouble with you. Now come outside before it gets too dark; and we will have coffee there. All the evening sounds are so soft and quiet just before the night comes on; and you will have a thick shawl wrapped round your head and shoulders, auntie; and we will wait for the new moon; and turn over all the silver in our pockets. Poor old Boat of Garry—it has gone away into the hands of strangers; but we will have one more quiet evening outside the porch, listening to the stream; until the

moon comes up behind the acacia, and then it will be time to get in-doors again."

It was a peaceful night—a night to be remembered. To one of them there, it seemed as if some haven might be reached after all,—of content, and affection, and gratitude. The darkness gathered over hill and shore; the moon rose into the clear heavens behind the trembling acacia leaves; the stream murmured down there beyond the lawn; the air was soft from the sea. A gracious night. There was hardly any need for speaking; it was enough to sit and watch the moon slowly rise, and the faint light tell on the grass and the gravel. Then there was a stirring of leaves around, and the air felt colder; it was with something of a sigh that they got up, and took their things with them, and went in-doors; leaving the slumbering world and the scarcely breathing sea to the silence and the stars.

When Fitzgerald went up to his room later on, after having bade them good-night, and also having made another sort of effort to let the old lady know that he was fully

sensible of her great generosity towards him, he found a half-sheet of notepaper placed somewhat prominently on the dressing-table; and at the first glance he recognised the clear, pretty hand-writing to be that of Mary Chetwynd. There was no message or explanation; only these words—"*I hereby promise to contribute twenty pounds a year to the fund for providing toys for Hospital children.*"

Well, he sat down and contemplated these words, knowing very well what they meant. It was an invitation to him to give to those poor children some small portion of the bounties that had been heaped on him. And the more he thought of it the more he was convinced that it would be a very strange thing if his literary efforts could not produce a yearly sum as great as that, or even considerably greater. As for the monetary arrangements that Mrs. Chetwynd might be disposed to make, he knew nothing about them as yet; but he understood that practically he was to have an income that would render him independent. Surely, then, literature might enable him to do as

much as this or more? So he went and got a pen, and scored out the word "*twenty*," and inserted the word "*fifty*," adding his signature in full—*William Fitzgerald.* And then he enclosed this document in an envelope, which he addressed to Miss Chetwynd; thinking he would leave it on the breakfast-table for her in the morning, without another word.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BOOK.

Well, in due course of time—that is to say, about the end of October—the original "Occupations of a Recluse," along with numerous additions, and with a series of illustrations taken from sepia drawings by John Ross, were given to the public in book form, and almost instantly commanded a very large sale indeed, and were widely talked of. The publishers happened to be masters of the art of doing a good thing well; and had spared neither trouble nor cost in getting these sepia drawings transformed into a set of admirable woodcuts; while many people who had read the "Occupations" in a fugitive way as they appeared in the *Daily Mirror*, were glad to have them in this permanent form. Moreover, the reviewers received the

book favourably, although one or two rather complainingly asked how they could be expected to classify this amorphous hotch-potch of philosophy, poetry, and snipe-shooting, as if there were any necessity that they should classify it at all; while the *Liberal Review* said that, although the writer of these papers was a contributor to their own columns (editors are but human, and cannot avoid these little touches), they did not see that was any reason why they should not praise good work when they found it. And when the *Liberal Review* people set about praising a book, they do it.

In the circumstances it was not likely that Mr. Scobell should miss his opportunity; and forthwith he made his way down to the Fulham Road. Fitzgerald still occupied the long low-roofed room there, for the sake of auld lang syne; but now there was a heavy *portière* shutting off the bedroom end; and there were some comfortable chairs, and more cheerful-looking rugs; while over the fireplace stood two brilliant Chanak-Kalesi jugs that Miss Chetwynd had given him, and that

were the sole ornament of the room. Mrs. Chetwynd, indeed, had begged of him to take some better rooms in one of the streets leading from Piccadilly; but he asked to be excused; for he had no mind to spend much money on himself. In fact, he was living pretty much in his old way; although, on one occasion, when both aunt and niece went down to his humble lodging, to have afternoon tea, he went to the extravagance, beforehand, of purchasing a modern Japanese tea-set and a few pots of flowers. It was then that Miss Chetwynd said the room looked far too bare, and promised him the two green and scarlet jugs.

"My dear f'lah," said Mr. Scobell, laying his hat and cane on the table, and taking off his yellow gloves, "let me congratulate you! You have done it at a bound—at a bound. It is the only book talked of at every dinner-table you go to. By Jove, sir, when I told them last night at Lady Lampley's that I knew every inch of your career, I found everybody listening. And I knew it; I predicted it; I said so to Gifford. I said to him

when I met him, 'Gifford, my dear f'lah, you don't know what people are talking about; you are in your own set. You keep among a literary set; and don't know what society is talking about; why don't you get Fitzgerald to write for you; why should he write only for the *Mirror*—a trades'-union, Methodistical, Republican rag like that?' Not that I approve of the politics of the *Liberal Review* either; you can't expect me; but what I say is that the *Liberal Review* is a gentlemanly sort of paper after all; you see it in good houses; when I go into my club I find it lying about."

All this while he was looking around.

"My dear f'lah, this won't do at all. When a penniless, supercilious good-for-nothing like that fellow Hilton Clarke sticks himself up in the Albany——"

"Poor chap, he is no longer in the Albany."

"—I say, why should you be living in a bunk like this? Damme, sir, you should have rooms in Curzon Street, and a private Hansom, and a hack for the Park! I am

told that Mrs. Chetwynd makes you a very handsome allowance."

"She does. But, you know, literature is best cultivated on a little oatmeal. And I find enough to do with my spare cash in another way."

"Oh, but my dear Fitzgerald," said Mr. Scobell, with a lofty smile, "you are throwing away your chances! You might go everywhere—you might go to the very best houses. I'll tell you what, now—my wife shall send you a card for one of her At Homes; and you ought really to come, don't you know; you'll meet some of the very best people, I give you my word. What's more; I want you, like a good f'lah, to give me a night for a little dinner at my club. It isn't a big club, it isn't one of the big swell clubs, isn't the Abercorn, but you'll meet a very good class of men there, I can tell you. And I'll ask old Gifford, if you like; and anybody else you like, and we'll have a little bit of a celebration, don't you know; for I tell you what it is, Fitzgerald, old f'lah, I feel as if I had had a finger in the pie, don't you know, and—and damme if I'm

not proud of it; and precious glad that you've made such a hit!"

There was really some frank good nature mixed up with the man's vanity. He took out his note-book.

"What night shall it be," he said. "Let it be a Saturday, the 15th or the 22d, and we'll have a house-dinner; and you'll see if the Abercorn can't give you as good a dinner and as good a glass of wine as any club in London."

"Either night you like, then."

"We'll say the 22d to give more time. What I say is, do a thing well. A man has no right to ask me to dine at his club, and give me the sort of dinner you'd get at a d—d common restaurant. When I ask a man to my club I want him to have the best that's in the kitchen and the cellar; and I'm not above taking trouble about it. What I say is, do the thing well. There's a lot of people, don't you know, nowadays who pretend to be above all that; being particular about good dinners and good wines and good cigars is beneath their high mightinesses' notice; they pretend they prefer water

to a claret that cost you a hundred shillings a dozen. Rubbish—all rubbish. What I say is, the good things of this life wouldn't be there if they weren't to be used; and I suppose Providence knows as much about what's good for you as any of the scientific swells. There's a good deal of that sort of nonsense goes on at the Chetwynds'; but the Chetwynds are not in fault. Upon my soul, I don't think it's respectful to your hostess to nibble a bit of bread and a cutlet, and drink a glass of water, and call that your dinner; I don't think it's nice; I call it bad form, I do; if any fellow did that at my table, I'm hanged if he'd find himself there again. The 22d, seven forty-five, good."

This was the true object of his visit; and he clasped his note-book together again with a satisfied air. Then he took up his hat and gloves.

"You made a suggestion—you were kind enough——" said Fitzgerald, timidly; and then he frankly said—"I wish you would ask my friend Ross, too, who made the sketches, you know."

"Delighted! My dear f'lah, a thousand thanks for the hint. Delighted!"

He took out his note-book again.

"Give me his address; and I will write to him at once. Delighted, I assure you. A deuced clever fellow that; the landscapes Mrs. Chetwynd has of his are excellent—I call them first-rate."

"But he lives just below," Fitzgerald said, looking at his watch. "And he will probably be at work now. Will you go down and see him?"

"By all means."

They went down the stairs and knocked at the door of the studio, and were admitted, apologising for their intrusion.

"Not a bit," said John Ross, who had his pipe in his fingers. "Come in. I was painting the portrait of the collie there; and he's not a good sitter; he was continually falling asleep; and I got tired o' whistling the poor creature awake; and was having a glint at the newspaper."

Mr. Scobell looked strangely around at the big, gaunt, dusty studio. And then, with

much roundabout phraseology and compliment, he explained the object of his visit; Ross's reply being briefly—

"Yes, I will."

But Mr. Scobell did not stop there. He began to make a round of the studio; and to offer remarks; while John Ross became a trifle peevish.

"Now I'll tell you what I'll do, Mr. Ross," said he, in his grand manner. "I don't see that an artist who can paint like that should not be known. I'll tell you what I'll do; I'll ask Sydenham to come to this very dinner."

Mr. Sydenham was a very distinguished painter and Academician; the husband, indeed, of the lady whom Fitzgerald had on one occasion taken down to supper, and who had politely declined to be bribed by sandwiches.

"Sydenham's a good fellow, a deuced good fellow; and a word from him would do you no harm. Now that is a mistake of so many of you artists and authors, don't you know; you keep hidden away among yourselves; and you don't go about, and get to know the

people you ought to know. I daresay, now, you never met an Academician in your life?"

"The Academy and I are no likely to become great friends," said Ross, drily. "I am a heretic. I will not conform. I like to paint in my own fashion; and they let me; and they go their way, and I go mine; and there is no quarrel between us. Indeed I am not sure but that they try to do me a favour when they put anything I send them near the roof—the effect of distance, you see, may soften the things down a bit——"

"But you don't mean to say, now," remarked Mr. Scobell, coming to a dead pause before a rough sketch that was propped up on the mantelpiece—a very rough sketch, indeed, of a farmyard, with one or two cattle and a heap of straw warm in sunlight, "that they would not give a good place to a picture like that? Now I call that uncommonly good. I have seen a good many pictures in my time. I have been to half the galleries in Europe—and precious sick of them I got sometimes, I can tell you. I don't profess to be a judge; but I know a good picture when

I see it; and I say that calf is as well painted a calf as anybody could want. Rough," said he, waving his hand slightly, "a little rough. Wanting in finish, don't you know. But a first-rate sketch; what I call an uncommon good sketch. I should not mind having that hung up in my hall. But the gable of the house is a *leetle* tumble-over, isn't it—I would suggest——"

He took the canvas down, and held it out at arm's length, examining it critically.

"It is nothing—it is a daub," said John Ross, rather impatiently, and he got the canvas out of his hands and put it up again, with its face to the wall.

But Mr. Scobell resumed possession of it; and again held it out at arm's length.

"No, no," he said, patronisingly, "it has merit. It is well balanced. I call the light and shade of that sketch very well balanced, indeed. And I am not afraid to trust my own judgment. I never give an opinion without being ready to back it with money. My notion is that a man should buy pictures that please himself; why should he care what

other people think? No, what I say is that's a very good sketch; an uncommon good sketch it is; very well balanced light and shadow; and the long and the short of it is, Mr.—Mr. Ross—that I will buy it. I should not be at all ashamed to have that sketch hung up in my hall——"

But now the red-bearded artist became very angry; and got hold of the unlucky sketch; and sent it spinning to the end of the studio, where it unhappily hit the sleeping collie, that forthwith sprung up with a howl, and slunk into a farther corner, with its tail between its legs.

"I would not have such a thing go out of the place," said he, briefly.

But he soon recovered his temper; and when at last Mr. Scobell, after much more encouraging and soothing advice and criticism, had left, all that John Ross said to his friend about the visitor was merely—

"Man, he's a bletherer, that one."

They went to the dinner, however, at the Abercorn Club; and a very sumptuous affair it was. They had the Strangers' Dining-

room to themselves; and it was brilliantly lit; and the table was magnificently decorated with flowers. Of the gentlemen present Fitzgerald only knew his host, his companion Ross, Mr. Gifford, and, by sight, Mr. Sydenham; but he was introduced to the others by Mr. Scobell, with a series of pompous little compliments, the ordeal not being the less severe that these portly middle-aged persons regarded him with such a silent, blank, lack-lustre-eyed scrutiny that he was on the point of saying, "Upon my soul I don't bite." He wondered what manner of men these were; and the mystery was not rendered less inscrutable when, after they had sat down, Mr. Scobell remarked to him in an undertone—

"There's seven millions, at this table."

According to Fitzgerald's way of counting there were only ten persons; so he was more hopelessly in a fog than ever.

"Seven millions, if there's a farthing," continued Mr. Scobell, in the same low tone. "And as you and your friend Ross and Sydenham and I have little enough, you may imagine what the other six have amongst them. The

man opposite me and his right hand neighbour are Directors of the Bank of England."

Then Fitzgerald began to see. No wonder these gentlemen were grave if they had the responsibility of owning seven millions of money weighing on them ; and there was a business-like seriousness in the way they attacked their dinner, not turning aside for frivolous pleasantries, but keeping a sharp eye on the successive dishes. In course of time, however, the severity of their demeanour abated ; the staccato remarks about the probability of another European war, which hitherto had represented their conversation, developed into an unanimous abuse of the foreign policy of the then French Government ; and then again one funny man, at the end of the table, would succeed in getting his next neighbour to laugh (when not too busy). John Ross and the great Academician appeared to have become friends at once, and were talking in an animated fashion ; Mr. Gifford was rather in an absent frame of mind ; while Scobell, at the head of the table, beamed and shone upon his guests in silence.

"Well, Fitzgerald," said Mr. Gifford, at length, "since we last dined together, one of the little group has rather dropped under."

"Do you know anything about him? Do you know where he is?" said his neighbour, knowing well whom he meant.

"In Paris. Not very well off, I fear. They say he is going to marry Lady Ipswich after the *decree nisi* is made absolute; and I believe her friends have made some small provision for her; but Clarke had always expensive habits, and I am afraid he is a little given to borrowing. But they have a pretty house, I am told, just outside the Marble Arch."

"The *Arc de Triomphe*," his neighbour suggested.

"Well, yes: what did I say? I hope his book will be successful; but the subject has so little interest for the general public——"

"His book? What book?"

"It came to the office the day before yesterday, I think. *The Laws and Limitations of Art* it is called——"

"Oh, I wish you would let me review it!" Fitzgerald exclaimed, with an eagerness that

made his companion regard him with a quick look.

"No," said Mr. Gifford, with an odd kind of smile, "we could not have one of our own reviewers abused in our own reviewing columns."

"Your columns?" said Fitzgerald in bewilderment. "Does Hilton Clarke write for you?"

"Sometimes," was the answer. "The *Weekly Gazette* got tired of him long ago; and he appealed to me. There are one or two things he can do very well. I am sorry for the fellow. I hope his book will be successful.; but I doubt it."

"Why won't you let me review it, then?" said Fitzgerald, who was on pretty familiar terms with the editor.

"You had some squabble with him, hadn't you, about the *Household Magazine?*" said Mr. Gifford, with his piercing eyes regarding him. "I gathered from Scobell that he had treated you rather badly. Well, that is nothing new; but still——"

"Oh, if you mean that," Fitzgerald said,

hastily, "you are quite mistaken. It is quite the other way. I meant to say everything I could for the book. He did owe me some money; but then, on the other hand, I owe him something. But for him I daresay I should at this moment be the sub-editor of the *Cork Chronicle*. I should like to praise the book."

"That is quite as bad a temper," said Mr. Gifford. "We will get some more impartial person—but some friendly person, I hope. And why should you want to write reviews? Scobell tells me you are now the owner of an estate in Ireland; and have a handsome income besides."

"I want to make all the money I can," Fitzgerald said, "for I know plenty of uses for it. And as for the Irish estate, I consider myself only the steward of it; though I get shooting and fishing for nothing; and also the most delightful quiet when there is a chance of running over. Ask your neighbour—oh, let me introduce you: Mr. Ross, Mr. Gifford—ask him—he is an artist—what he thinks of Boat of Garry."

Mr. Gifford thereupon turned to John Ross, and Fitzgerald was left unoccupied, whereupon Mr. Scobell, who had overheard some chance phrase, said—

"I say, my dear f'lah, what did you mean by that dedication?[1] Upon my life, I don't know whether the dear old lady was more pleased by it or more indignant. She did not speak to you about it, perhaps?"

"Yes, she did. She thanked me; that was all. What was there to be indignant about?"

"'My dear Mr. Scobell,' she said to me—you see, Fitzgerald, I have known the Chetwynds for many years; they have always been in our set. 'My dear Mr. Scobell,' she said, 'what does the lad mean by describing me as of Boat of Garry? Won't he take it when I give it to him? He wanted to give

[1] This was the dedication in question, prefixed to the little volume:

To my friend and benefactress,
MRS. ALGERNON CHETWYND,
of Hyde Park Gardens, and Boat of Garry, Ireland,
This collection of idle papers
is most respectfully dedicated.

it to Mary, to squander away; and now he wants to saddle me with it. Can't I get rid of it anyhow?'"

"Oh, but that is all right," said Fitzgerald. "That is quite settled and understood. Mrs. Chetwynd and I understand the position perfectly; and so also does M— Miss Chetwynd."

So the banquet went on; the talk becoming generally louder; with gushes of laughter here or there; and perhaps nothing occurred particularly deserving of mention except that one tall and portly gentleman, of a most severe and repellent countenance, who had been boring everybody to death about his travels in Armenia, was heard to remark, in the most innocent manner, of a well-known statesman whom they were discussing, "Well, all I can say is that he is a man of very strange fancies, very strange fancies indeed. He took a most unaccountable dislike to myself. A most singular thing. Yes, and he showed it too—damme, he showed it;" and also that Master Willie, by a base and unworthy subterfuge, obtained a triumph over his enemy

of former days. For he began to talk to Mr. Gifford about familiar quotations; and in the most naïve manner observed that few were better known than

"*De par le Roi, défense à Dieu,*
D'opérer miracle en ce lieu."

The editor fell into the trap headlong.

"*De faire miracle—de faire miracle,* I think," said he, politely.

"*D'opérer,* I think it is," said Fitzgerald, graciously.

"Pardon me, I am sure you are wrong. It is a most familiar quotation. *De faire miracle en ce lieu.*"

"I would not contradict you; for, as you say, the couplet is so well known."

"Oh, there is not a doubt of it—not a doubt of it. Every schoolboy knows it. *De faire miracle,* of course."

"My authority for *d'opérer,*" continued his foe, in an absent and indifferent kind of way, pretending to be very busy in examining the constituents of a mysterious-looking sweet, "is not very absolute. I found it in the Notes to an old edition I have of Voltaire's

Pucelle; along with a little history of St. Paris. The date of the edition is 1773; and the couplet is spoken of as being familiar. But perhaps it is a misquotation."

"Perhaps, perhaps," said Mr. Gifford; but he lightly changed the subject and wanted Fitzgerald to tell him how the Game Laws affected the poorer tenantry in the south-west of Ireland. And Fitzgerald imparted to him what information he could on that subject, without recalling to him the fact that they had had a dispute about the same couplet in former days when they did not meet on quite such equal terms.

At last the bounteous feast came to an end; and there was much hand-shaking on the steps of the Abercorn Club. As far as Fitzgerald was concerned, it very soon appeared that this big dinner might, if he chose, be regarded as only the beginning of a quite indefinite series of similar repasts, though perhaps of a more domestic kind, for the little book made its way in a remarkable manner; and probably there was something in its contents that made people curious about

the personality of the author; and, no doubt, he might have figured at a great many afternoon teas, and dinner-parties, and midnight receptions. But, as it turned out, he found his life far too full of occupation for anything of the kind. When he dined at all in the evening, he went to, or stayed for, Mrs. Chetwynd's *table d'hôte;* and it is more than probable that he would have earned the contempt of Mr. Scobell by his indifference to the good things of this world, or such of them as appeared on the dinner-table. But it was a fine thing, this constant and busy occupation; this finding that both time and money were inadequate to the calls made upon him. The "old, hysterical mock-disease" got in a manner jostled out of existence; there was no longer any room for it. That was all left behind now;—except, alas! when the wonder-world of sleep was opened; and again he was walking with Kitty on the sunny Sunday mornings along the hawthorn lanes outside of Cork; or rowing her home in the moonlight, she singing the while, past the silent quays of Inisheen.

CHAPTER IX.

IN THE EAST.

It may easily be surmised in what direction Fitzgerald was now spending what time he could spare from his literary labours, and what money he could save from his stewardship, as he considered it, of Boat of Garry. At first he accompanied Miss Chetwynd on one or two of her Eastern expeditions with far more of curiosity and interest than of hope; for it seemed to him, as it probably would to any outsider, that to seek to alleviate the distress and misery of this vast population with any such means as were at their command, was about as sanguine as to try to drain an Irish bog with a sponge. Moreover, it was not very picturesque—as she had forewarned him. Very rarely was the wretchedness tragic; it was merely mean and commonplace; existence in these foul-

smelling lanes and desolate grimy squares seemed a lack-lustre kind of thing; occasionally the people were suspicious rather than grateful; and always they misplaced their h's. But by-and-by, as time went on, and as he saw further into the mechanism of the various organisations, he could not help admiring the patient heroism of those voluntary missionaries who, not deterred by the vastness or the difficulties of the task, busily and cheerfully set to work to do what they could; and he began to see the appreciable fruit of their labours, even if it were only a touch of light and colour added here and there to those poor ignoble lives—a flower-box in a window-sill; a drinking-fountain, perhaps; an exhibition of pictures; a bit of green thrown open to the children, with a swing or two. Then the free libraries, with books, magazines, and newspapers; cool in the summer, and well-warmed in the winter, with coffee at a penny a cup; and the lectures and readings and entertainments, now putting some inkling of sanitary requirements into the heads of the grown-up people,

again teaching the boys and lads something of the qualities that built up England; and the invaluable district nurses, carrying notions of cleanliness and kindliness into these poor homes; and so forth, and so forth: all this busy, silent, unobtrusive work, not appealing loudly for subscriptions, and not claiming for its authors any title to martyrdom, seemed to him a very noble thing. This sympathy quickly led to practical help. At the outset he rather wished to act merely as assistant and safe-guard to the niece of his benefactress; but he soon found there was no need for that. She had no fear; and there was nothing to fear. In another way, however, he was of use to her. Mary Chetwynd was very much at home in dealing with "her poor people" as she called them, directly; and she had an admirable self-possession on the platform, whether she was demonstrating to an assemblage of men and women the awful effects of drinking unfiltered London water, or reciting patriotic poems to an audience of Whitechapel youths; but at the Council board of the Society she was somewhat diffident. It

very speedily appeared, however, that, when Mr. Fitzgerald was in course of time elected to this board, the new member held very strong opinions about the rights of minorities—especially when the minority was Mary Chetwynd. Arguments and grumbling were alike thrown away upon him. No, there he was; there he would stay. And at last, upon the burning question of beer, matters came to a final issue.

"Very well," said he, when he and Miss Chetwynd had been entirely outvoted, "we need not quarrel. You may go your way; but you can't hinder me from going mine. As I said, I don't think a glass of ale can do any harm—if not given to the boys; and I don't think it fair to ask these men to come and spend a long evening without giving them that small amount of indulgence. Now I mean to try it——"

There was a kind of murmur of protest at this: was he going to ignore such a solemn thing as a vote?

"But you may have it either of two ways. Either I will resign altogether, and be free

to act that way; or I will remain a member of the society, making any entertainments I get up my own affair—at my own expense I mean—so that for them the society will not be responsible. That will take away the reproach of beer from you; it will be my doing alone."

There was a little further grumbling; but the second alternative was eventually chosen. They did not wish to get rid of Fitzgerald altogether; for he was an active sort of fellow; and he had time and money at his disposal; and they had seen how well he got on with the men and boys at these meetings, keeping order in a good-humoured, hectoring way. Besides they had had one or two newspaper squabbles, and he had been found to be an efficient champion in that direction.

But when they got outside Mary Chetwynd said to him, regarding him with eyes that seemed frightened and laughing at the same time—

"Oh, Mr. Fitzgerald, what have you done?"

"Nothing dreadful, I hope," he said, with a smile.

"When you said 'I,' of course you meant 'we'?"

"Well, then?"

"But how do you expect you and me to do all that by ourselves? Think of the expense. Auntie will be furious. She does not mind about me; but she says I am ruining you; and that you are getting no pleasure in life——"

"Didn't I promise to go over to Boat of Garry in July; and you and she, I hope, will come over and stay there too?"

"And I have some remorse also," she continued. "You would never have raised the beer question, if I had not told you about it in Ireland. Then that little —— Theatre costs £8 : 10s. a night, without any beer. If I could pay for everything, I should not mind. Or if you would have a hack and ride every day in the Park, as Mr. Scobell suggests, then auntie would be more satisfied, and I should be sure you had some kind of —of——"

"But do I look so unhappy?" he asked, with a laugh. "However, your mention of Mr. Scobell is most opportune. I think I ought to plunder Mr. Scobell——"

"Oh no; after the filters——"

"But he has friends. At a dinner last year he told me six of them then at the table were worth seven millions. Now if we could get Mr. Scobell to squeeze them a little, what would it matter about the —— Theatre costing £8 : 10s. a night?"

"You know best," she said, simply; "and I hope we have not undertaken too much."

But indeed—whether he or she knew, or whether both were ignorant—what interested him in that work down there, and what was a constant delight to him, so that the various pursuits or pleasures on which he might have spent the very liberal income he enjoyed were not even to be thought of, was the mere spectacle of herself in her relations with these poor people. The beautiful, quiet serenity of her nature seemed to shine there, amid all that turmoil of want, and care, and ignorance, and crime. Wherever she went peace sur-

rounded her. Sickly and ailing women, inclined to succumb altogether to the hard pressure of fate, drew strength from the self-reliant character of this mere girl, and struggled on anew. Many a one of them told Fitzgerald that none of the district-nurses could bring such cheerfulness into a house as she could. He grew to think of her what they thought of her. He heard their stories of her; he saw her through their eyes—this King's daughter with the outstretched hands, blessing and comforting wherever she went.

"Willie," said Mrs. Chetwynd to him, one evening before the guests arrived for the *table d'hôte*, "why did you not read to me that article in the *Liberal Review* about benevolence—about the reaction of benevolence on one's self—what was it called?—Benevolence as an Investment?"

"I saw the article," said he, evasively.

"Yes; and you wrote it?"

"Why, how should you think that?" said he.

"Because Mrs. Sims was here this afternoon; and she read it to me; and both of us

agreed that you had been describing our Mary."

"I—I hope you don't think there is anything that would annoy—that would be too personal—if Miss Chetwynd were to see it?" he stammered.

"Well," said the bright little old lady, "considering that you give her all the virtues of an angel, with half-a-dozen other womanly ones, I don't think she ought to object. And indeed, you know, although she is my niece, I must admit that the portrait is recognisable."

So the time passed; and Mary Chetwynd was very proud of the success of the new venture that Fitzgerald had started (though whether that success was due to the merits of the lecturer and the efficiency of her stage-manager and body-guard, or simply to beer, it would be unnecessary to discuss) and there was no great difficulty about funds, after all. Then Fitzgerald and Mrs. Chetwynd and her niece went over to Boat of Garry in the July of that year; and John Ross went with them, being commissioned to reproduce one or two

of his sepia sketches in oils; and they had a pleasant stay there until the end of August. Altogether their life, either there or here in London, was an uneventful one, full of cheerful activities and kindlinesses; and there seemed no reason why any one should wish it changed.

But accidents happen. One evening, after they had come back, Miss Chetwynd had arranged to have her following of youths and lads assemble in the little theatre before referred to, to have displayed to them, by means of a series of magic-lantern projections on a large screen, some portraits of great Englishmen, with occasional remarks by herself. Ordinarily, on such occasions, Fitzgerald was there at the marshalling of the lads, ready with a good-natured cuff, to preserve manners if need be; but the truth was that, as long as "the lady" was present, they were very well-behaved indeed. On this evening, however, there was some serious business elsewhere about a poor wretch who had purloined a book from one of the free libraries to buy (as he said) a loaf of bread;

and so Fitzgerald did not get along to the theatre until the lecture, or entertainment, or whatever it might be called, was well on its way. He slipped into a corner of the pit (there were neither stalls, gallery, nor boxes in this little theatre) and sat down.

The lecturess seemed very self-possessed and familiar with her audience; talking to them as she selected this or that slide; and occasionally coming to the footlights to address them directly.

"Now," she said, as she was stooping over the table, to pick out the proper slide, "I suppose some of you read *Jones's Journal?*"

This was a wretched little local print, which did a good deal of mischief down there. Her audience, perhaps thinking that the portrait of the great Mr. Jones was about to appear on the screen, stamped their feet a bit. On that she rose erect, and faced them with some astonishment.

"Oh!" she said, "is that the kind of paper you admire? I hope not. I hope not, indeed! Perhaps some of you think that

when Mr. Jones is denouncing the Government, and saying they have done this, that, and the other thing, he could do it better himself? Would you like to see him try? Is he likely to know more about governing a country—is he likely to be more honest—than men who have been educated all their lives for it, many of them very rich men who, if they had chosen, might have spent all their time in amusing themselves with horse-races or yachts, but who, instead, go through an amount of labour and drudgery that the hardest worked among you don't know anything about, only to find themselves called swindlers and pick-pockets by gentlemen like Mr. Jones? Well, now, I know something that will enable you to judge of Mr. Jones. I know that he has been twice before the magistrate for drunkenness and was fined each time; and I know there was an execution in his office not very long ago; and I put it to you whether a man who manages his own affairs like that would be likely to be able to manage the affairs of the country?"

This argument, though somewhat crude,

and even verging upon libel, was, at all events, easily understood.

"No—no!" was the general response.

"Well, now, I am going to put before you the portrait of a great Conservative statesman, a most able and distinguished man. Perhaps I am not a Conservative myself; but that is neither here nor there; I want you to believe that the men who govern England on both sides in politics, are trying to do their best; and that the man who tries to stir up people to lawlessness and discontent is doing his worst and making nothing but mischief. Don't you believe that the rich have stolen the money they have; in most cases it has been brought together by their fathers and grandfathers being sober, industrious, and able men; and when these people try to make good laws you ought to be glad of it instead of howling at them as if they were tyrants. It is the interest of everybody to preserve law and order. Why, if it was not for law and order, how could your mothers and sisters go along Whitechapel Road on a Saturday night, looking at the

shops, and buying things for the Sunday dinner? It is the law that protects them from being pushed down and their money taken from them. And so far from regarding the police as your natural enemies, or the enemies of anybody, you ought to think of what Stepney or Whitechapel would be without them, and you ought to be precious glad to lend them a helping hand when you see a thief bolting, or when you see a band of roughs coming along the pavement, hustling the women off and annoying peaceable people."

She put the selected slide into the magic-lantern; the man in the "wings" lowered the gas of the footlights, and when the large, visionary, coloured figure of this Conservative statesman appeared on the screen, it was greeted (despite all the tirades of *Jones's Journal*) with a murmur of approval. But just at this moment something else happened. One amongst the audience, whose eyes had wandered away from the large circle of light on the screen, had noticed a flickering of another sort of light along the edge of a por-

tion of the curtain; and thoughtlessly he called out "Fire!" There was an instant of dead silence, every one looking all around; and then, as the red light up there attracted their eyes, there was a universal rush and clamour. Fitzgerald jumped to his feet, and called to them to sit down; but he might as well have called to the sea. There were no shrieks or screams, for there were no women present; but a wild struggle to reach the doors, and a consequent wedging up of the excited crowd. They could not squeeze through. Then the black mass—or a great portion of it—seemed to turn; frightened faces looked here, there, everywhere; then the stage was charged. Fitzgerald caught the first one that made by him; and jammed him down on to the form.

"Sit down, you fool; there is no danger!"

But he might as well have tried to put his hands on a pack of wolves. They swarmed up and over on the stage; seeing which Fitzgerald leapt up there too; shoved them aside, and made for the spot where Miss Chetwynd was standing, her face somewhat

aghast. She was not regarding the flames overhead; she was looking at the rushing crowd that was now hurrying wildly towards the narrow passage leading from behind the stage. He caught her hand—or rather it was her wrist—and held it tight.

"Do not be afraid," said he, glancing up at the smouldering curtain, and then at the disappearing people. "There is no danger. They will all get out."

"I am not afraid, so long as you are by me," she said, in a rather proud kind of way.

He turned and looked at her eyes; and her eyes met his.

"For always, then?"

She did not speak; but she placed her hand over his hand that held her wrist; and so they remained; waiting for the wild surging mass to get free away; while the red light overhead grew more distinct.

It was a strange situation; but he seemed to have no fear. He remembered afterwards that he was trying to calculate how many more seconds it would take for the last of the crowd to get through: also wondering when

the firemen would arrive, and whether the theatre had been left altogether without attendants; and at the same time watching quite calmly the progress of the flames. They did not proceed rapidly. It was some little time before the woodwork caught fire anywhere; for at first it slowly blackened and frizzled, as it were; then a pale thin blue fire became visible here and there along its surface; then a quicker glow of crimson gleamed up.

"Shall we go now?" he said—for the loud cries for Dick, and Harry, and Jack, and Bill had grown fainter and fainter.

"When you please," said she, with firm lips.

There was no trouble or danger about the matter. Just as they were leaving, a loud splash and hissing was heard overhead and a shower of heavy drops of water came over the stage. They made their way along the "wings" and out by the stage door; and found a large crowd assembled in the street, kept back from the fire-engines by the police. In ten or twelve minutes the whole affair was

over; and it only remained for Fitzgerald to get hold of the gasman from among the crowd (the rascal had been among the first to bolt) to have the gas turned off, so that there should be no explosion; while, by the light of some candles, and with the aid of a few of the boys, he got the magic-lantern apparatus collected and carried to a four-wheeled cab outside, in which Mary Chetwynd was awaiting him.

When at last they had driven away from the dense crowd that still lingered about the place there was a better chance for speaking; but silence seemed to be enough. At length she said—

"You once offered me Boat of Garry. And now you give your life to me. What next?"

"It will become worth something when you take it," he answered.

CHAPTER X.

IN A GALLERY.

And now we must let a few years go by, and come to a certain Private View day at the Bolsover Gallery, Hanover Square. This Gallery, which was intended to be an adjunct rather than a rival to the Royal Academy, had been opened for the first time the year before, and had provoked a good deal of animadversion, favourable and otherwise. For while some declared (with more insistence than was at all necessary) that its chief characteristic was an affected imitation of the manner of the early Florentines, but with the beauty and light and gladness of the old painters replaced by a sickly languor and distortion and decay; that the decorative character of the classical designs in no wise served as a cloak for obvious ignorance of anatomy and consequent bad drawing of the human form;

and that the landscapes were less remarkable for a reverential study of nature than for an impertinent audacity, there were others who maintained (with a touch of personal injury in the tone of their remonstrances) that this Bolsover Gallery collection was a welcome relief from the inanity of the common run of exhibitions; that at all events it drove people to think; that a seeking after the highest in art, with whatever shortcomings, was better than the complacency of mediocrity; that, in short, anything was desirable that could help to get rid of the simpering curate sort of stuff that had for so long told its commonplace and silly little stories on the walls of British galleries. It needs only be added here that among the most vehement of the admirers of this new institution was John Ross. Whether dissatisfaction with the Royal Academy's continued neglect of him may have had anything to do with this feeling it is unnecessary to enquire; for human motives are mixed things; but at all events his championship of the new Gallery was so uncompromising that Mrs. Chetwynd, who was always on the look-out

to do little kindnesses in this way, contrived a meeting between Sir Cyril Smith, who was the Director of the place, and the Scotch artist, which had, as it turned out, sufficiently important results for one of them.

So on this summer-like day in spring there was a large and fashionable assemblage circulating through the rooms, or congregated in groups here and there, chatting, or regarding their neighbours' costumes, which, among the young maidens at least, tended rather to sadness of hue and quaintness of design. But there was one group there, of which a tall, bright-eyed young lady was a conspicuous member; and certainly her gown, if there was a suggestion of mediævalism about the shape of it, was not lacking in boldness and richness of colour. It was a velvet gown, of the colour of the very darkest sort of wall-flower—a deep ruddy purple; and it was trimmed with lace, or what appeared to be lace, of a dusky yellow—not the yellow of primroses, but rather of daffodils. It was more the costume of a young matron than of a girl; but indeed when you looked at this

person, it was not her dress that first attracted notice, but the grace and self-possession of her bearing, and the bright, frank laugh of her eyes.

A tall, elderly, handsome man made his way through the crowd to her.

"My dear child," said he, taking her hand, "I have been hunting for you everywhere. I was told you had come. And how well you are looking! And your dress, too—they say it is the prettiest in the room. Very pretty—very pretty!"

"But you need not praise me for it, Sir Cyril," said she, "nor my dressmaker either. My husband chose the colours. Was not that obedient of me? I told him I dressed only to please him; and that he might as well choose what colours he liked best. Was not that sweet of me?"

"Ah," said he, "young wives are always like that, at first——"

"Young wives, indeed! And my boy will be four years old next June!——"

"And your boy will have very little to thank you for, if you go catching another

fever, and have to winter in Italy, leaving the poor little fellow at home. Where is your husband?"

"Oh, he's away with John Ross somewhere—fighting, no doubt. They're always fighting now—ever since we came back from Italy——"

"Have you been round the rooms yet?" he asked, glancing at the little group of friends from whom he had slightly separated her. She forthwith introduced him.

"No," she said. "It is a little too bewildering yet—to me at least. All one's friends seem to be here; and it is so difficult to remember all you want to say at the moment that one has no time for the pictures. It is more exciting than sitting on a terrace at Sorrento; or in a verandah at Capri, watching the tourists climbing up the steps on the donkeys. We went to Ischia after you left us. Now don't stop talking to me, Sir Cyril; for you have all your friends to receive——"

"And the whole day to do it in," said he, lightly. "No, but I am coming back to you.

You must not go away anywhere for lunch. I will come for you at one. Mind you have got hold of your husband, and Mr. Ross; there is something very nice and quiet prepared in a corner—an invalid's luncheon, you know. Now go and get a seat; don't stand about all day; but indeed I never saw you looking better in my life."

He was going away, when he suddenly turned.

"Bless my soul," he exclaimed. "I was almost forgetting to ask how your aunt is—better, I hope?"

"Oh, I think so. I think she is almost quite better. But she likes perfect rest, and seems disinclined for the trouble of going out; she says she won't go with us to Boat of Garry this year."

"But she is not ailing now?"

"Oh no, scarcely at all; the warm weather suits her, and all she suffers from now, she says, is an incurable laziness."

"One o'clock, then, mind."

Almost immediately after Fitzgerald came hurrying along.

"Have you heard? Has any one told you?" he said, eagerly.

"I have heard nothing in particular," she said, "but why did you put on that shabby old shooting-coat? Every one else has a frock-coat; and gloves. Where are your gloves? This isn't Capri."

"Every one says that Ross's pictures are the feature of the exhibition," he said, in the same rapid way, not in the least minding her remarks about his clothes. "They have given them the place of honour at the head of the next room—all five in a row. Come along and see them. Gifford—" Here he turned to Mr. Gifford who, with his wife, a tall and stately dame, was now examining some of the pictures close by. "—Gifford, come and see some pictures in the next room. I told you they would make their mark——"

"Your friend Ross's, I suppose?"

"Yes. Come and judge for yourself. Mind you, I mean to praise them, friend or no friend; so if you are afraid of the reputation of the *Liberal Review*, you'll have to get somebody else. Or we will appeal to an impartial authority, if you like."

No doubt Mr. Gifford, as the little party together made their way up to the head of the next room, considered that he himself was quite sufficient of an impartial authority; and, as it turned out, he was much struck by the series of landscapes. Or rather, there was only one landscape, treated under five different atmospheric conditions. The subject was the stretch of meadow, water, hill, and sky, visible from the window of the dining-room at Boat of Garry; the first showing the calm, clear dawn arising in the east, the world being quite still and silent and lifeless; in the second was all the variety of a windy summer day—masses of white cloud and shadow, the trees blowing, the work in the fields going on, and over at the horizon an ominous rising of purple; then, in number three, a desolation of rain, everything gray and blurred and hopeless; number four showed the afternoon clearing up somewhat, with a golden mist beginning to tell as the sunlight got through the moisture; and, finally, the peace of a clear moonlight night.

"A most excellent idea!" exclaimed Mr.

Gifford, at once. "Why, that is how one becomes familiar with a place! Why has no one done that before? No one wants any more variety than that—indeed, it shows all the more what skill the artist has when he can do without fresh materials. My dear fellow, you may praise those as much as ever you like. They are the best things I have seen in the exhibition yet, except your wife's portrait. Praise them as you like; I shan't interfere with you."

"But, you know," Fitzgerald said, "there will be a scrimmage amongst the critics, just as there was last year. Now don't let the *Liberal Review* in for anything rash. I'll tell you what I'll do; suppose we appeal; suppose we take the opinion of a thoroughly skilled artist?——"

"Not a bit. On that theory you would have me allow poets to review other poets' poems; and novel-writers to review other people's novels; and so on. Would that be fair? We have set our faces against it since ever the *Liberal Review* was started."

"And yet it seems to me the only opinion

worth having," Fitzgerald ventured to say, "if you can make sure it is without bias. Who can decide anything about any art who has not shown that he has mastered its technicalities? Surely the valuable opinion is that of a man who knows the art; who is himself a proficient; and who is so far above everybody else that jealousy or envy is out of the question——"

"And do you expect the *Liberal Review* to pay men like that——"

"Oh, I was not talking about writing at all," Fitzgerald said, with a laugh. "I was talking about these pictures. Now I would take the opinion of Sydenham before any other. He is far beyond rivalry; he can paint landscape just as well as portraits, and nobody can come near him in either——"

"He is too good-natured; he finds good in everything," Mr. Gifford objected. "I have walked round the Academy with Sydenham. Not a word of objection anywhere; always the best points picked out; the difficulties explained to you; always praise, especially if the picture is by one

of the younger men; always encouragement —very good-natured; but not criticism. No; I propose that if there is to be any appeal, it will be to your wife, for she knows the place. Mrs. Fitzgerald, we want your opinion of Mr. Ross's landscapes."

"Oh, don't ask me," said the tall young lady in the wall-flower and daffodil gown; "I want to buy them, and can't afford it."

"Well, that is an honest criticism," Mr. Gifford said. "I think, Fitzgerald, you may let the *Liberal Review* speak well of the Boat of Garry studies. But where is Ross himself?"

"He won't come into this room. He says it is like having himself put into a frame, and people examining him with a microscope."

But now they had to set to work to go through the galleries systematically and seriously, though that was often interrupted by the arrival of a fresh batch of friends who were all of them anxious to see the portrait of Mary Chetwynd (as some of them still called her) which had been painted by

Mr. Sydenham, and which was supposed to be the chief ornament of one of the rooms. They were joined by Mr. Ross, moreover, whose remarks, if somewhat disjointed and dogmatic, were generally to the point.

"That fellow?" he said, regarding the work of an artist who had obviously spent an enormous amount of care in constructing an allegory (but the conundrum was difficult of solution until you turned to the title in the catalogue). "That fellow? Look at the thrawn necks; look at the sham sentiment! That fellow? he would get painted tin flowers to put on his mother's grave. There," said he, turning to the full-length portrait of Fitzgerald's wife that hung in the middle of the room. "Look at that now. That is painted by a man who knows that it is his business to paint, and no to bother his head with the twelfth century or the fifteenth century or any other. Long ago he shook off the corpse-cloths; you canna bind a giant in spider-webs. There's just nothing that man cannot paint: put it

before him—a young lady's face, a bit of moorland, a collie dog—no matter what it is—put it before him, and then you find the master-hand getting it on to the canvas with a power and a carelessness that has grown out o' the anxiety and hard work of a life-time—the details that tell *in*, the details that are of no use *out*. Look at that fan for colour now—the sharp line in the dusk of the dress. Look at the eyes: they're no saying 'What do you think of me? Am I looking my best? Am I standing right?' They're saying 'Here I am. I am in the world as well as you. I could speak to you if I liked.' People think he is careless; I say that he is careless about what is non-essential; but many a hard struggle it took him to find out *that*. Would they like him to labour the thing, so they could count the pins in the pin-cushion?——"

"My dear Mrs. Fitzgerald," said a voice behind them, "I must really beg and entreat of you to come away."

They turned and found before them Mr. Sydenham himself, and also his pretty wife,

whom Fitzgerald had in bygone days endeavoured to bribe with sandwiches.

"Is it fair?" said he. "Is it the act of a Christian woman to stand opposite my paint, and show people the difference? And you just back from Italy, too, with the Neapolitan sun on your cheeks?"

"I was listening to a lecture, Mr. Sydenham," said she. "Mr. Ross was delivering a lecture; and you would have been pleased if you had heard."

"Is it to be 'claw me, and I'll claw thee,' then?" said the famous Academician, with a good-natured smile. "There's nothing in these rooms to beat your fine Irish sketches, Mr. Ross."

"It's no a claw I want from ye, sir," said John Ross, grimly. "It's a 'scratch,' when some decent fellow some day puts me up for an Associate. It is what everybody looks for, I suppose; though I jalouse there'll be more gray nor red in my beard by that time."

"You shall have my 'scratch' and welcome; and I hope long before then," said

the Academician ; and then again he begged Mrs. Fitzgerald to come away from the neighbourhood of her portrait, which she was not loth to do, for she was very hungry she said, and one o'clock had arrived.

Presently Sir Cyril Smith appeared and carried the party off in a body—John Ross alone seeming shy or reluctant. But he was very soon put into a pleasant humour by his neighbour at table, who happened to be Mrs. Sydenham, who said she imagined he must be the friend on whose behalf Fitzgerald had endeavoured to bribe her with sandwiches.

"That was no use," said he, bluntly.

"No, I should think not," said this pretty woman, with a charming smile. "I should think not indeed. Not sandwiches. At my time of life one knows better than to eat sandwiches——"

"I wasna thinking of that, mum," said Ross, "I was thinking your husband ought not to be bothered with any such things. A man that can paint as he can paint should have nothing in the world to interfere with

his time or attention; if he wastes a day, the country loses just so much——"

"Oh, but he takes great interest in the younger men. And I am very glad he thinks so highly of your pictures—it was not to you alone he said that; and—and, of course, you must be proud of the place they have got——"

"Oh ay," he said, "the tod will find a hole somewhere——"

"I beg your pardon?"

But as he did not answer—or did not hear—she went on to say that she understood he was again going to Ireland with the Fitzgeralds; and they were going early this year, were they not?—and had he been allowed to see anything of the volume of poems—or poetical dramas?—that Mr. Fitzgerald was understood to have finished in Italy, and that was now on the eve of publication. John Ross answered as best he could; but he was getting rather discontented; for there was nothing to drink at this needlessly sumptuous repast but thin cold wine. At last, however, he said to the

servant who was in vain tempting him with various decanters—

"I say, my man, could you get me a wee drappie o' whiskey?"

"Yes, sir; certainly, sir."

And after that Mr. Ross proved a far more pleasant companion; and gave Mrs. Sydenham such a picture of the life at Boat of Garry, and such graphic accounts of the exploits of himself and his friends there, that she said that nothing but his description of the demon steam-yacht deterred her from begging for an invitation there and then.

After luncheon there was a movement to return to the pictures; and Fitzgerald seized the opportunity to bid them good-day.

"Where are you off to now?" his wife asked.

"I want to overhaul one or two of the libraries, if there's time before dinner."

"Let me go with you."

"In that dress? You would be a pretty spectacle in Shoreditch."

"I could remain in the Hansom."

"Get away with you. You are off duty; you are a helpless invalid—though you don't look it. Stay with Mrs. Sydenham, and see your friends. My shooting-coat isn't swell enough for that."

"Very well," she said. "When shall you be home?"

"At a quarter to seven whatever happens. I left word there would be an enormous *table d'hôte;* so you can seize hold of all the nice people. Don't forget John Ross; don't lose sight of him. We will make John Ross the occasion; and we will get him to make a speech."

"You will do nothing of the kind; I won't have anybody tortured. Shall I ask the Giffords?"

"Yes."

"And the Sydenhams."

"If they have not had enough of us to-day already. Ask anybody you like, who happens to be disengaged. It is John Ross's day; let him have a triumph in the evening."

And in a couple of minutes thereafter he was in a Hansom making for Commercial

Road East, and striving to extract a few items of intelligence from that morning's newspaper, which he had not before had time to glance over.

CHAPTER XI.

AT INISHEEN.

And again we will let a few more years go by, bringing us to quite the other day, in fact. At the window of a room in the Imperial Hotel at Inisheen a small boy, apparently about eight or nine, is standing, regarding the carriage and pair below, which are being led off to the stable-yard. He is a good-looking little lad, with large, soft, pensive eyes, a square forehead, and curly hair—a healthy-looking little chap, too, though one foot is off the ground, and he is supporting himself with a stick. To him enters his father.

"Well, Master Frank, shall you be able to amuse yourself while I go out for a stroll? You see what comes of climbing after wood-pigeons' nests."

"A good job, too," remarked the small boy, with complacency.

"What is? Spraining your ankle?"

"Yes. You wouldn't have brought me with you if it hadn't been for that, papa. Mamma said you were very busy. And I wasn't to interfere with you. I was to take great care not to be a trouble to you, she said, for you liked to be alone when you were finishing a book, and I wasn't to mind if you left me by myself. And I don't mind a bit."

He glanced round the room.

"And is this really the inn that your papa kept?"

"Yes, it is; perhaps you don't think much of it?"

"Well," said the small boy, with delicacy, not wishing to wound his father's feelings, "it isn't *very* swell, is it?"

"When I was a boy, my lad, it was the only hotel in Inisheen, and it was regarded as a place of importance. See, here are your books. You'd better sit down for a while, and give your foot a rest."

"I like the stories you tell better than

those in the books," remarked Master Frank, regarding the volumes with anything but favour, "only mamma says I ought never to believe them."

"Which, though?"

"The stories you tell. Mamma says you are always making a fool of people. Was it true, papa, about the man who went to India?"

"Really there are so many people go to India that I have forgotten."

"But the man who went out to India; and he pretended to have a sun-stroke; and then, when he came back, he was allowed to do anything he liked, for his friends were afraid of bringing it on again, and the police always let him off, because he had been mad; and he lived such a merry life. Was that true, papa?"

"Well, if it had not happened, how would people have known anything about it?" was the evasive reply. "Now take a book; and put your foot up on a chair; while I go and see if there's anybody in the place I know now. I don't suppose there will be

since Andy the Hopper—do you remember the sketch of him that Mr. Ross made for you one night?——"

"Oh yes, papa."

"Well, he is away at Tramore now, they say; and I doubt whether there is a human being I know now in the town."

And yet, when he went out into the sunlight this older part of Inisheen did not seem to have changed much during the last seven years. If there was any difference, it lay rather between the Inisheen that he was accustomed to dream about and this present, everyday, rather commonplace Inisheen. This was the second time he had visited the little town since finally he had left it for London; and on each occasion the same rectification had to be made. Yes; there were the quiet, respectable-looking houses, and the shops, and the town-hall; the wharves and quays, with tar-barrels, and coals; the barques and brigantines stranded on the mud; and the broad waters of the bay; and the sunny green of the hills beyond. To get a wider view he climbed

up the face of the steep slope on which the town is partly built; there were cottages here and there apparently clinging hazardously to the ascent; fragments of old ruins cropping up; cocks and hens fluttering among the dust or hiding among the nettles; children clambering over walls topped with marjoram; and an old gentleman, in a jacket without sleeves, fast asleep in a damp and shady angle of a garden wall which was profuse with moss and hart's-tongue fern. Then he came to the enclosures round the houses of the richer people—on the summit of the hill, amid gardens and lush meadows; and from this height he could look down on the picturesque little harbour; and the rippling green waters of the bay; and the wide sand-banks left exposed by the tide; and also on the far expanse of sea, pale and blue in the hazy sunlight, with one or two dots of ships apparently making slowly in for the tiny port before a gentle southerly breeze.

He felt so much of a stranger here. No doubt, if he were to go through the shops down there he might discover this one or that

who would perhaps recognise Master Willie; and no doubt, if he were away up over the hills there ("the mountain" they called them) he could find a cabin or two where he would be welcomed by some aguish old crone, with many a "Glory be to God!" But of his old intimates, as he had learned from time to time, there was scarcely one left. His father had died many years before. Why, even the *Cork Chronicle*, which the Inisheen people used to take in chiefly because Master Willie put his poetry about Inisheen, and his songs and palaverings about the Inisheen girls, into it, existed no longer. When he drove up to the Imperial, the very ostler who took the horses had never heard of the Fitzgeralds who once had the place. And yet, as he looked at the quays and the houses and the harbour, Inisheen did not seem to have changed so much. It was he who was changed; and something else — was it his youth? or a remembrance of his youth that, whether he thought of it or not, was always haunting him, and making Inisheen look strange?—seemed now far away.

He wandered down from this height, thinking he would go and have a look at the newer Inisheen that faced the sea. As he was walking along the main thoroughfare of the older town—perhaps not noticing much—and passing one of the side streets leading to the quays, he heard an exclamation behind him—

"The Lord be marciful to us."

He turned instantly and recognised old Molly, who for innumerable years had sold nuts and apples and oranges to the boys of Inisheen. The old woman struggled up from the barrel on which she was sitting—

"Och, God help us all, 'tis yoursilf, Masther Willie!" she said, and she seized his hand with her long skinny fingers. "Och, 'tis the great gintleman you are now, wid your horses and your carriages riding through the town. Shure I thought 'twas yoursilf, Masther Willie; and then I thought 'twas nansinse; and sure you're come to take the place your father had before ye—his sowl's in glory, amin!—oh, wirasthrue, but me back is broke wid the cowld nights—and yer hon-

our's coming back to the Impayrial now—and you'll have a good word for ould Molly wid the sarvints——"

He had to explain to the ancient Molly—whose aspect, by the way, would have been more venerable had her gray hair been less dishevelled and had she worn a dress more appropriate to her age and sex than an old soldier's jacket, the scarlet of which had got sadly faded through exposure to wind and weather—that he had no intention of re-establishing the Fitzgeralds in the Imperial Hotel; and then he presented her with all the silver he could find in his pockets and passed on.

How often he had walked along this very road, in the far bygone days, with the eager ambitions and wild desires of youth busy with the future! And now that he had attained to almost everything he had dreamed of—in certain directions to far more than ever he had dreamed of—to what did it all amount? Well, he had made many friends, known and unknown; and that was pleasant; and he strove to remain

on kindly terms with them; and to do what little he could, in the way of writing, if that might be of any service to them, in as thorough and honest a fashion as was possible. But, so far as he could see, there was not anything in life much better than showing a picture-book to a sick child, or some such simple act of benevolence or charity; and in this respect he had entirely adopted the views of his wife. Neither he nor she was concerned about the motives that might be imputed to them. If it was a luxury, they could afford it. If it was self-gratification, at least it did not harm others. If it was outraging the principles of political economy, the principles of political economy would have to look out for themselves. In short, both he and she, as it turned out, found themselves with so many things to do that they really had no time to sit down and construct analyses of the Moral Faculty.

This modern Inisheen out-fronting the sea was more changed than the older part of the town, for a number of new-looking villas had been added—most likely the summer

residences of the Cork people. But it was pleasanter for him to turn his back on these, and find before him the old familiar ocean-picture; the spacious view that he was in the habit of conjuring up before his mental vision whenever he wanted to introduce a sense of light and width—and perhaps a touch of solitariness?—into his writing. Solitary enough it was. Nothing but the level miles of pale brown sand; and the vast extent of glassy pale blue sea; and between these the long thin lines of the ripples that came in and in, darkening in shadow, until suddenly there was a gleam of silver, sharp as the edge of a knife, and then a curling over of white foam sparkling in the sun, and the protracted "*hs—ss—ss*" as the wave broke along the shore. A pale and placid picture; perhaps a trifle sad also; for with such a faint and fair background, the mind is apt to set to work to put in figures—and these would be walking along the sand, naturally; and they might be young; and dreaming dreams.

Then he recollected the poor chap with the sprained ankle; and so he turned and

walked leisurely back to the hotel; discovering, when he got there, that Master Frank had been engaged the while in carving his name, in bold letters, on one of the window-shutters.

"When I grow up, papa," said he, contemplating this tentative effort at immortality, "I hope I shall be famous like you."

"Who told you I was famous?" his father said, with a laugh.

"Mamma. I wish I could get such nice letters from people you don't know; from America, and Canada, and as far away as where Robinson Crusoe lived. Sometimes mamma reads them to me. What did you do to make the Queen call you 'well-beloved'?"

"What nonsense has got into your head now?"

"No, it is not," said Master Frank, pertinaciously. "Mamma read it out of a big book. The Queen said you were 'trusty and well-beloved.'"

"Oh, that is nothing. Don't you know, when the Queen appoints you a Royal Commissioner to enquire into anything, that is the

phrase she uses. I suppose your mamma had got hold of that Blue-book——"

"But the Queen would not say so unless she meant it. She doesn't tell lies, does she?"

"Why, of course not. Well, Master Frank, until you are older we will postpone the subject, and in the meantime we will have some tea. I suppose you are aware that you may have late dinner with me to-night?"

"Just as you please, papa. Mamma said I was not to trouble you——"

"And you have remembered your lesson very well. In consideration of which I will tell you a story——"

"Oh, will you?"—and immediately the small lad hobbled across from the window to his father's knee, looking up with his big girlish-looking eyes full of expectation. For the stories his papa told were far more wonderful than anything to be found in books.

"Not only that—but it is a story of a bull!"

"A *very* wild one?"

"A *fearfully* wild one."

There was a sort of sigh of delight.

"Well, this bull used to roam about just behind this very town of Inisheen; and it is very open there—plenty of bog-land—and he could see you from a great distance; and he'd come stalking along the road, right in the middle, and allow no one to pass. And he was especially savage with boys: and you wouldn't believe the roundabout ways we had to take——"

"Oh, were you one of them, papa?"

"I was alive then," the story-teller continued, evasively, "and I may have looked on and seen what the other boys did. But the terrible business about this beast was that he could hop over a wall with the greatest ease; and it was no use shutting a gate on him, if he meant to be after you. He was a terror to the whole district—especially to the boys; and we used to get angry—I mean, they used to get angry, and wonder what they would do to the bull if only they could get the chance. Then at last one of us—one of

them hit on a plan. They went carefully along the road and picked out a place where the bog came close up, and where there were just two or three clumps of moss so that you could cross over if you went lightly and watched your footing. Of course you remember what Bruce did at Bannockburn——"

"He dug pits and covered them over——"

"Precisely. Well, then, this was a sort of ambuscade like that. I don't think ambuscade is the right word; but it's good enough for a bull. Well, then, the next thing the boys did——"

"But you were one of them, papa?"

"I might be looking on. I might have gone round by the bog that day. At all events they went to a person called Andy the Hopper that I've often told you about; and Andy was a curious-minded creature, who always liked to have red sleeves when he could afford it to his jacket; and they got the loan of an old jacket with the red sleeves; and they spread that out on two sticks; and away they went along the road. And there,

sure enough, was the bull. He didn't say anything; he only looked. Then they went on, cautiously; until they were within a certain distance; and there they stopped. The bull didn't move. Then they began to retreat a little—and you must know, Master Frank, that a bull always understands that as an invitation for him to come and chivy you. The bull came on a bit; stopped for a second; then gave a loud bellow; and then came on faster. This was precisely what those wicked boys wanted. For now they turned and took to their heels; and the bull came careering after them; and then, at the spot they had marked, they left the road, and went hopping across the bog, that was very wet at that time, for there had been much rain. Very well, then, you see, when the bull came tearing along, he had no notion of a strategy or an ambuscade or anything of that kind; and he did not stop to consider that he was far heavier than a boy; and that his sharp hard feet would sink where theirs would just touch the little dry clumps; and so in he went with a splash and a struggle—and another splash

and a struggle — and another splash and another struggle—always getting deeper and deeper into the thick black mud, and bellowing and roaring with rage. You never saw anything like it. Mind you, when we stopped and looked, I won't say we weren't a little bit frightened; for if one of his fore-legs had got hold of a piece of good solid ground, we might have had another run for it, and he'd have knocked the whole town to smithereens before he'd have stopped. After a long time, however, he gave it up. He found his struggles useless; and when he bellowed it wasn't 'Wait till I catch you,' it was 'Who's going to get me out?'——"

"Papa," said Master Frank, thoughtfully, "could you have got near him then?"

"Oh yes, I daresay. He was stuck fast."

"You could have got near him in safety?"

"Oh yes, I think so," answered the father, not doubting that the boy, who had been taught to be kind to all animals, had imagined some way of getting the poor bull out of his troubles.

"Then didn't you get a big stick and beat

him over the head?" said Master Frank, eagerly.

"Well, no," said the papa, a little disappointed. "But I'll tell you what happened—it took nearly half the people of Inisheen to get that bull out; for they were all afraid to go and fasten the ropes; and when it did get on to dry land again it seemed anxious to reduce the population of the neighbourhood. I don't think I saw that," the narrator added, demurely.

"You didn't wait to see it hauled out?" said Master Frank, with staring eyes.

"No, you see, Frankie, there were a lot of wicked boys about the place; and the people suspected they had inveigled the bull into the bog; and supposing I had been about just at that time—looking on, you know—well, they might have thought I had had a hand in it, and one might have got into trouble. It's always the best plan to keep away when you see a scrimmage going on. The most innocent people are sometimes suspected. Never you go near crowds."

Master Frank thought over this story for

some time; and then he said, in an absent kind of way—

"I believe it was you yourself, papa, that teased the bull into the bog."

They had late dinner together in the evening, and no doubt it was that circumstance that provoked Master Frank into unusual animation and talkativeness, in the course of which he unlocked many a dark and secret cupboard of his mind, where he had stored away subjects or remarks for subsequent examination. He startled his father, for example, by suddenly, and *à propos* of nothing, asking him how it was possible for a man to have three godmothers.

"I don't know what you mean!" his father said.

"Why, don't you remember, papa, the organ-grinder coming to Hyde Park Gardens, and playing 'The Last Rose of Summer'?"

"No, I don't recollect that remarkable circumstance. I suppose he didn't remain very long?"

"But don't you remember you asked

mamma what sort of a man he could have been who first twisted the air about with variations; and then you began and told me all that you hoped had happened to him when he was alive?"

"Well, I don't remember that either."

"And you said you hoped he had three godmothers, and never knew what his name was, because they kept bothering him——"

"I am not quite sure; but I think we must have been talking nonsense, Frankie."

"And mamma said you had invented enough evil things for him, and you might turn to the men who were cutting the tails off cattle and shooting at people here in Ireland."

"The less you say about that the better, Master Frank; for in this part of the country walls have ears."

"I know," said Master Frank, confidently, "that mamma will be very glad when you have done with the fishing, and we all go back to England again——"

"Nonsense!"

"But I heard her say so, papa!"

"She was having a little joke with you, Master Frank. You don't understand these deep questions yet, my lad. Don't you know that I am not a landlord, nor an Englishman, nor one who pays rent? So you see I can't do anything wrong; and we are as safe at Boat of Garry as in Hyde Park——"

"I know mamma does not like you to go away fishing by yourself," said Master Frank, doggedly.

"But do I ever go away fishing by myself—or did I ever go away fishing by myself until you must needs set about spraining your ankle? And supposing there were any of these rascals about Boat of Garry, which there are not; and supposing they were coming stealing along on tiptoe when I wasn't watching; and supposing you were standing by with a gaff in your hand, and a gaff with a remarkably sharp steel point, what then? What would you do? You can lay hold of a salmon or a sea-trout smartly enough. Could you catch one of Captain Moonlight's men by the ear?"

The boy did not answer that, for he was evidently considering something with much care. At last he said, meditatively—

"I wish you were the king, papa, and then you would show the rascals something."

"But how? What should I do?"

"Kill the whole lot," was the prompt answer.

"Well, that would teach them a lesson, wouldn't it!"

Dinner over, Fitzgerald drew in his chair to the fire—more by custom than for warmth, for the night was mild—and lit a cigar, and proceeded to look over a newspaper. This last performance was a sore trial for the patience of Master Frank, who doubtless considered that it would have been much more sensible to devote the time to a discussion of the affairs of the country between two congenial minds. As for himself, he scorned to seek refuge in books. Not having two legs that he could twist about the chairs in his usual fashion, he put the one at his disposal into every conceivable attitude, until he nearly succeeded in tilting

the table over with his foot; then he tied a bit of string to a teaspoon, and twitched, to see if it would spin like a spoon-bait; then he got out his pocket-knife and slowly and carefully sharpened the edge on the boards of a book, finishing up by carving his initials thereon, just to try the point, as it were; and then, as time went on, he grew suspicious.

"Papa," said he, "you are not going out, are you?"—for, indeed, Fitzgerald had once or twice gone to the window and glanced outside.

"If I do," his father said, "it won't make any difference. It will soon be time for you to be off to bed. I may go out; but I shall not be long; and you will be sound asleep."

Nothing more was said for a while; Master Frank being engaged in drawing a portrait of Balbus on the title-page of his Latin Grammar. Then he said—

"Is it a beautiful night, papa?"

"Oh yes."

Then again—

"Is it a *very* beautiful night, papa?"

"The moon must be getting higher now," his father said, going to the window, and pushing the blind aside. "Oh yes, it is a fine enough night."

The boy got hold of his stick and hobbled across the room.

"Let me look, papa. Oh, isn't it a beautiful night! What a pity it is we can't see the sea."

"Frank," said his father, putting his hand on the boy's head, "would you like to go with me?"

He looked up with a bright, eager look of assent and gladness; but instantly—with a great deal of bravery—he shook his head.

"I promised mamma not to bother you," he said, slowly. "And—and besides, papa, I can't walk."

He hung down his head a little, to hide the tears of disappointment that would rise to his eyes. His father was looking out of the window, and did not notice. But presently he said—

"Poor chap, you've had rather a dull afternoon. Look here, Frankie, I'll tell you

what we'll do—as sure as ever was. The horses have done almost nothing to-day; supposing we were to get the carriage round? What do you say to that? We'll go for a drive, my lad; and then you'll not only see the sea in moonlight, but the bay also, and a wooded glen I was going to. What do you say to that?"

"Mamma won't be angry?——" suggested Master Frank, doubtfully—but it was clear from his face that he regarded the proposal with immense delight.

"We will buy her something, Frankie, to pacify her, when we get back to Bantry. Now you go and sit down; and I will get hold of Murtough; and as soon as we can we'll have the carriage ready for you. But I can tell you, my lad, that wasn't how I was treated when I was a boy—there were no late dinners for me, or a carriage to take me out for a drive in the moonlight. I really don't know what this generation is coming to."

"But, papa, if you could have got it, you would have taken it?" said the boy, looking up.

"That's neither here nor there," his father said, as he put on his hat and coat. "That's neither here nor there. What I say is that boys nowadays are spoiled; and especially boys that are allowed to come to Boat of Garry when they ought to be at their school at Campden Hill; and still more especially boys whose mothers buy for them a twelve-foot trout-rod before they've even got the length of *omnis Gallia.* Now don't you attempt to go down those stairs till I come and fetch you."

Fitzgerald seemed in the lightest and pleasantest of humours when finally he and his small boy had got themselves ensconced in the open landau, with an abundance of rugs over their knees. He had, indeed, been loth to leave the little chap for a second time that day, even though it was not very far from his bed-time; and he was glad to give him this unexpected trip as some compensation for the dulness of the afternoon. Moreover the night was fine. The air was mild; the skies clear; Inisheen and its wide, still waters looked quite picturesque in the moonlight.

"And what would you say now, Master Frank," his papa asked, as they drove out from the town into the silence of the country, "if I were to tell you that I had a tryst with the fairies in the wooded glen I told you about?"

The boy looked up; he seldom knew whether his father was joking or in earnest.

"I did not think there were any fairies nowadays," was the answer.

"Well," his father continued, "if you ever make a tryst with Don Fierna and his little people to come and visit them once in every seven years, you will find it more and more difficult, as you grow older and older, to listen hard enough to hear them coming, and to look hard enough to see the sides of the glen opening and the long procession appearing. When you are young perhaps it is a little easier. Do you remember how they stole away Burd Helen into Elfinland?"

"Oh yes. You told me about that."

"Then you remember that Childe Rowland was the youngest of all her brothers. Do you think any of the older ones could

ever have found out the dark tower, no matter how Merlin helped them? If Childe Rowland had not had the eyes of youth, he never would have found his way; and I believe Burd Helen would have been in the dark tower still."

"I have never seen any," was the small lad's practical remark.

"Well, that is strange. But in any case you won't mind waiting a little while in the carriage, when we get to the glen, and I will go down by myself, and if I hear or see anything I will come back and tell you."

"Oh, but I know better than that, papa," said the boy, shrewdly. "You are not going to look for any fairies. When you go away by yourself, it is to watch rabbits and other things, and write about them. I know very well. Whenever mamma sees you go out alone, without your fishing-rod, she always calls us back."

"Oh, indeed. But then, you see, Frankie, you were never at Inisheen before; and strange things used to happen about here, many years ago, when I was young; and I

don't know what may not be seen in that glen. So you will remain in the carriage for a while, when we get there; and if I spy out the fairies down in the hollow, with their glow-worm lamps, you know, I shan't say a single word to them, but I'll come back to the road at once and whistle for you. Do you understand?"

"That's all nonsense, papa. I don't believe there are any."

"Wait and see."

At length they arrived at a portion of the road that was shadowed over by a double row of elm-trees; and here Fitzgerald called on Murtough to stop; and got out, leaving Master Frank in the carriage.

"Now, you listen, Frankie," said he, "and when I whistle make ready——"

"I could not go down into that glen with my sprained ankle, papa," the boy said.

"People never know," said he, as he went up and over the little bank by the roadside, "what they can do when they see fairies coming along. It is quite an event in one's life."

Indeed, it was with no great heaviness of heart, no very acute anguish of remembrance, that he now, for the second time, and in middle-age—that is to say at seven and thirty—went to keep the tryst he had made at three and twenty. It was with a brisk enough step that he crossed the open glade, and then more cautiously made his way down the steep bank, through the brushwood, until once more he stood by the little scooped-out hollow in the rock, into which the water fell with a continuous murmur. The place was quite unaltered. It might have been yesterday that he and Kitty had stood there, with their hands clasped, before he rowed her away back to Inisheen. It might have been yesterday that he had gone back to the place only to find himself standing there alone; conjuring up phantoms, and not then quite so reconciled to the fate that had befallen him.

Yes; that former visit, seven years before, had been a sharper thing. It seemed to him that then, for the first time, he had realised what this separation meant. Our other griefs

and miseries over the loss of our loved ones who go away from us through the sad portal of death, keen as they may be, are in time solaced by a wistful hope of reunion. What is that but a temporary separation, if they are awaiting us yonder, with light on their faces? But this separation from one who, as we think, is to be linked with us through this brief life, and in death, and in the farther life beyond—that seemed to him the true separation; and the breaking down of faith; and a hopelessness for ever and ever. Something of the old misery had come back on him; the old pain had stirred again at his heart; the quick, sudden agony of the discovery of her falsehood had throbbed again, even after these years. It was so strange—his standing here on one side; on the other a vacant space, a voiceless air, a darkness where the light of her eyes ought to have been. That night was one not easily to be forgotten.

But now, seven years later, all that was over for the most part; and he sought out a bit of rock which afforded him a kind of seat;

and sat down and listened to the monotonous gurgling and rushing of the water. He was scarcely sorry now that all that had happened in the olden time. It was a kind of pretty picture, mostly. Or rather it was a kind of well of romance and sentiment that he could dip into when he pleased, for literary purposes. Nay, to tell the truth, had not this very journey been partly undertaken with some such purpose? It was like renewing one's youth, to get into this realm of imagination again. That may have been the moral of his remarks to Master Frank about the increasing difficulty of finding out where the fairies were.

And yet, while he was thus convincing himself that he was a highly matter-of-fact person; and striving to regard that episode in his youthful life as something apart from him; and inclined to wonder what influence on his writing these occurrences and despairs and all the rest of it may have had; some foolish fondness for the bygone days stole over him; and he would have been glad to know that Kitty was well, and looking pretty,

and enjoying content. He had heard of her once or twice, but in the vaguest way. He did not know where she was living now. And indeed the only regret that possessed him at this moment was about the final portion of that vow that he and she had taken together. Why should there have been any hatred or revenge in these promises made by two young people who could know so little of what was before them? Kitty herself had begged of him to make it a love night. He remembered the imploring look of her eyes; the very tone of her voice (and how sweet and soft and musical that was!) "*Oh, Willie, not that,*" she had said, "*let this be a love night!*" Did he wish "*grief to be a guest in her house, and sorrow to dwell in her house, for ever?*" Surely not.

Kitty had made his life very beautiful for a time. Supposing that he had never met her at all—in these early years? Could he ever have understood quite so well that nameless witchery that makes so much of the wonder and joy of human existence and is the cause of so much of its misery? Could

he have known quite so intimately what all the poets have been talking about, since ever Helen came to Ilion's towers—with "her young eyes still wounding where they looked?" He never would have known how keen the blue of the speedwell was, had not she and he together found it on those far uplands, that now seemed to him as if they must have been very near the sky, so clear and vivid was the light over them. Poor Kitty! Did she ever sing now "Then farewell, but whenever you welcome the hour?" Had she ever come to Cork again; and climbed up to Audley Place; and thought of the old days? There was no reason why she should not have made such a pilgrimage; her husband was well off; Kitty would have a maid of her own now; and she used rather to like travelling about.

The night was just as still as that on which he and Kitty had come there; there was not a breath of wind stirring the bushes overhead; the only sound was the prattling of the streamlet in the silence.

"It sounds like laughing," he was think-

ing. "Perhaps it has listened to all the nonsense that has been talked by the different lovers who have come here; and it may have understood all the time; and gone on chuckling. It does sound as if it was laughing. To think of all the secrets it has heard; and the vows; and never a word of warning as to what it knew of the results. Is it malicious; or only sardonic—that chuckling down there? But it is better to make a joke of it. Everything gets laughed away in time."

All that bygone period seemed far away; and beautiful in a fashion, now that the pain of parting with it was over. It had enriched his life; there were innumerable pictures he could conjure up—always with Kitty smiling and pleasant as the central figure; perhaps, too, it had given him a key to unlock some of the secrets and mysteries of existence. Was there any need to think harshly of poor Kitty or to speak of betrayal or falsehood? We do not quarrel with the dead. She was as one dead to him; and the memory of her was not tragic, or even pathetic, but rather pretty,

with a vague and poetical charm around it. It had been pathetic and tragic enough, and darkened with terror and pain and the wrestlings of despair; but now, when he thought of her, he saw a laughing and pleasant Kitty, rather inclined to be impertinent, and wandering carelessly in sweet woodland ways. It was never for Kitty to rise to the level of this other and beautiful nature that he knew; that was linked with his; that provoked his wonder and admiration the farther that he saw of its nobleness and simplicity. No; Kitty was a charming little coquette; tender in a way; not without her good points; and a very fitting heroine for love-verses in the *Cork Chronicle*.

And yet—and yet—there was a kind of tremulousness about those pictures that rose before him; he could not quite coldly regard them, and ticket off their literary value; sometimes a trace of the nameless fascination and glamour of youth came wandering down through the years—a memory of something that he had seen in Kitty's eyes. Was it the night in the South Mall; the streets all

swimming with mud and rain; the gas-lamps shining golden on the pavements; these two under one umbrella; and Kitty suddenly turning her face to him?—— Or was it the Sunday morning up by the barracks; a Spring morning, with the rooks cawing, and the air sweet; and Kitty, not knowing he was there, and going by him, and then raising the tear-filled eyes with astonishment and a quick glad light of love? Kitty had pretty eyes in that olden time; and a pretty voice, too, whether she was laughing, or singing about the Bells of Shandon, or only teasing poor old Miss Patience.

He rose. To look over one's life in this way, however satisfied one may be with the existing result, is a sad kind of thing; and the stream down there in the semi-darkness seemed no longer chuckling and laughing at the follies and dreams of youth, but rather saying something of a farewell as it hurried away to the sea. "*Farewell — farewell.*" So lives pass to the unknown, and are forgotten.

He laid hold of one of the bushes, and clambered up into the moonlight again, and crossed the open space to the wall; then for a second he turned and glanced up and down the little valley, that lay there so white and still. He was glad it had chanced to be so beautiful a night. This was a peaceful picture that he would carry away in his memory. In bygone years he had looked forward to a solitary keeping of his tryst with a shuddering dread; but what was there to dread about it? It was a pretty place; and he had awakened some recollections that had a sort of half-pathetic poetic fancy about them. That was all. He wished he could paint the glen as it looked now; but he thought it would be difficult to convey the sense of solitude and remoteness that the perfect silence produced.

He mounted the wall and leapt down into the road.

"Well, Master Frank," said he lightly, "I am sorry to have kept you waiting so long; I almost think you'll want some supper when you get back."

But he found the boy standing up in the carriage, and looking wonderingly along the road behind them.

"Papa," said he, with an expression almost of alarm on his face, "did you see her? Did you see the lady?"

Fitzgerald stopped for a moment: he was just about entering the carriage.

"What lady?" he said, in a perfectly calm voice.

"Didn't you see her? A lady in mourning," the boy said; and now he seemed to be more reassured. "I don't know who she is. I don't know her; but she came up and spoke to me."

His father regarded him, apparently unable to say anything; his hand still grasping the door of the carriage.

"She said 'Is your name Willie?' I said 'No; my name is Frank.' Then she said 'But it is Frank Fitzgerald, is it not?' I said 'Yes.' Then she said 'Will you let me kiss you?' And she was crying when she lifted her veil. And then she went away along the road back there."

Fitzgerald glanced along the road; there was no one visible. Then, with every appearance of composure, he stepped into the carriage; shut the door; and said briefly—

"Home, Murtough."

"Papa," said the boy, presently, "who was she?"

"How can I tell? Don't bother me—not at present."

There was a strange look on his face, as they drove on in silence. Frank remembered his mother's injunctions; when his father seemed disinclined for talking, he could keep his mouth shut. And indeed they were near to Inisheen before Fitzgerald again spoke.

"Don't you see, Frankie," he said carelessly, "it is the most natural thing in the world? Of course there are plenty of visitors always coming down from Cork to the seaside—to the villas I showed you; and on such a beautiful night why should not any one go out for a walk? Or the lady who spoke to you may belong to some house

in the neighbourhood; there is a little village, Carrigha, not more than half a mile farther on. Why, it's the simplest thing in the world. It is just the night for any one to come out for a stroll. But I am beginning to doubt whether there was any such person. You were thinking of the fairies, Frankie—wasn't that it?——"

"Murtough saw her, papa!"

"Oh, well; a visitor in the neighbourhood, no doubt," he said, absently.

"But how did she know my name?" said the boy, still wondering.

"That's what she didn't know," said his father — though he seemed to be talking about one thing, and thinking about another. "As for guessing at Fitzgerald — that is nothing. It is simple to make a guess like that. Every one about here is a Fitzgerald or a M'Carthy. That is nothing. No doubt she belongs to Carrigha. What was she like, did you notice?"

He spoke with indifference; but did not look at the boy.

"N—no," the small lad said, doubtfully,

"for she was crying — and — and I was frightened."

"But she kissed you?"

"Oh yes."

His father was silent for some time.

"Perhaps the lady has lost a little boy of about your age," he said, by-and-by.

"Perhaps that is it," Master Frank said, thoughtfully, "for she was dressed all in black."

Then they rattled through the streets of the little town, and drew up at the door of the hotel.

"Now, Master Frank," said his father, when they were both together in the sitting-room, "you must be up early to-morrow; for we have to drive all the way to Cappoquin; and we ought to be there as soon as Mr. Ross."

"To-morrow? So soon as that? I would like to have stayed some days at Inisheen, papa," said Master Frank, wistfully.

"Why?"

"To see all the places you have told me

about. I would like to have seen the cabin where Jerry the tailor's hawks are; and — and the place where the bull went into the bog; and mamma said I was to be sure to cut her a piece off the hawthorn-tree."

"What hawthorn-tree?"

"The one you used to climb up; and the branches spread out at the top; and you used to have a seat there, and a book, and no one could see you——"

"Do you know, Master Frank, that cutting memorial bits off trees and carving your name on window-shutters are amomgst the most heinous of crimes? And it would be no use your remaining in Inisheen, and trying to see all these places, for you can't get about easily at present, poor chap. No; some other time we will have a longer stay here; and perhaps we will come over in the winter; and then you might go out with me for a night after the wild-duck: wouldn't that be fine?"

"Oh yes, papa,"

"And meanwhile we must get away at once from Inisheen, so as not to keep Mr. Ross wating, at Cappoquin or Lismore. When I was at your age I could easily get ready to start by seven."

"Do you mean seven to-morrow morning, papa?"

"Yes."

"Very well. I will be ready by seven."

And still he lingered about the room, without saying good-night.

"Papa," said he, at length, "when I told you about the lady, why did your face turn so white?"

His father was sitting at the fire, staring into it; and did not hear.

"Come and say good-night, my lad," he said, presently, "and I will call you at half-past six, if you are not up. You are sure you won't have any supper? Very well, good-night!"

"But I was asking you, papa——"

"Asking me what?"

"Why did your face turn so white, when

you were in the road, and I told you I had seen the lady?"

"Nonsense—nonsense! Your head has got filled with fancies to-night, my lad—you were too close to Elfin-land, perhaps. Good-night; and don't dream of Don Fierna."

"Good-night, papa."

The next morning was again fine; and they had every prospect of a beautiful drive along the banks of the richly-wooded river. And when Master Frank, seated in the landau, and having his sprained ankle carefully propped and cushioned, understood that he was to see something more of the Blackwater, he almost forgot his disappointment over missing the various places at Inisheen he had expected to visit.

"Of course, papa," said he, "you'll show me the very spot where you fell in and lost the salmon?"

"We shall go near there anyway," said his father, as they started, and drove away through the town.

"And you'll show me the moorhen's nest, won't you?"

"What moorhen's nest?"—for, indeed, this boy's memory was wonderful.

"Don't you remember, papa, you told me about a moorhen that had got a bit of wicker-work by chance and had pieced it into her nest. I *should* like to see that."

"Bless the boy!—do you imagine that the nest is in existence yet? All these things that I have told you about happened years and years ago."

They were now away from the houses; and he rose in the carriage, and turned to have a last look at the place they were leaving. Inisheen looked fair enough in the early light. The shallow green waters of the bay, the boats by the quays, the Town Hall with its golden cock, and the terraced hill with its gardens, were all shining in the morning sun; and far beyond the harbour the pale blue sea was broken here and there with sharp glints of white, for there was a fresh breeze blowing in from the south.

When he sat down again there was an absent look on his face.

"That moorhen's nest, Master Frankie," said he, regarding the thoughtful eyes of the boy, "belongs to a time long gone by; and things change. Poor lad, that is a lesson you will have to learn for yourself some day."

THE END.

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